

HITS
AND
MISSES



CHARLES
FREDERIC
GOSS



SECOND COPY,
1889.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. BX9178 Copyright No.

Shelf. G.57H5

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



Hits and Misses



Hits and Misses

By

Charles Frederic Goss

Author of "The Optimist," etc.



Fleming H. Revell Company

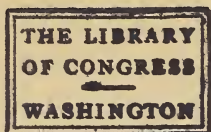
Chicago :

New York :

Toronto :

Mdcccxcix

c



BX9178
.G57H5

38148

Copyrighted, 1899

By FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

TWO COPIES RECEIVED.



21241
Mar. 23. 99.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I Adam-Zad, or "The Truce of the Bear"	11
II The Most Common is the Most Sacred	31
III Laying a Modern Specter	53
IV The Very First Thing	75
V The Discovery of God is the Clarification of the God Consciousness . .	93
VI Hope, the Practical Equivalent of Knowledge	111
VII Righteousness is Rightness	133
VIII The Sacred Leaven of Sorrow	155
IX He <i>Can</i> Believe, Who <i>Will</i> Believe . .	171
X Temple-Building, a Universal Instinct .	195



Desiring that the kindest, the most appreciative, and the most faithful Congregation should be able to recall (if they ever cared to) some of the words addressed them in the past year, I have selected these nine sermons for publication, and dedicate them in love to my dear friends of the Avondale Presbyterian Church.

CHARLES FREDERIC GOSS

Cincinnati, May 24, 1899.



Adam-Zad, or "The Truce
of the Bear"

*When he shows as seeking quarter, with paws like
hands in prayer,
That is the time of peril—the time of the Truce of
the Bear.*

.
*Over and over the story, ending as he began,
There is no truce with Adam-Zad, the bear that looks
like a man.*

—Rudyard Kipling.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!—Luke ii, 14.

No merely human mind has ever been able to foresee all the consequences of any single event. There is often a startling disproportion in the causes and results of human history. The mountain labors and brings forth a mouse, and the mouse, with his tiny teeth, liberates a lion or lets in a flood. Immensities dwindle to nothings, and nothings expand to immensities. More often than otherwise, God is in the still, small voice rather than the earthquake, and the weak things are more likely to confound the mighty than to be confounded by them.

Nothing is more common or more trivial as a passing event, than the birth of a little child. Nothing is more helpless, nothing more insignificant than a newborn baby. One of them is ushered into being at every beat of the second hand of the clock, but it is hardly more than once in a century that one of them leaves more of a mark upon history than a vessel on an ocean. And yet that event which is so like-

Hits and Misses

ly to be the most insignificant, is capable of becoming the most stupendous.

Nineteen hundred years ago a little child was born in Bethlehem and cradled in a manger. It was no stronger and, perhaps, no more beautiful than others, but that birth has proven to be the greatest event of time. That little, helpless child has been the pivot of human history, and every century makes it plainer that the government of the world is soon to rest upon those then so tiny shoulders.

On this anniversary of his birth, it is fitting that his followers should confess their faith in him and once more renew their allegiance. Here, then, in the presence of God, we pronounce our creed. We believe that Jesus Christ was Son of Man and Son of God—the Savior of the world.

Among all the varied and significant events of that illustrious night in which the Savior of mankind was born, I select the proclamation of the angels (that his birth was the herald of peace to a world whose garments had been rolled in blood since time began) as fitting for this hour.

A few months ago another event transpired, whose significance no prophet nor son of prophet can foresee. One of the most powerful monarchs on the globe put forth a sum-

Adam-Zad, or the Truce of the Bear

mons to all the people of the world to unite in bringing about that universal peace which the birth of Jesus Christ had heralded. His proposals, stated briefly, are: 1. That there should be declared a truce of God for five years. 2. That during that period the governments should not increase their expenditures on armaments beyond the figure stated by them at the conference as the maximum of their need. 3. That some international agreement should (if disputes should arise between the signatories of this pact) bind them always to invite the mediation of neutral powers before appealing to the sword.

No living man can tell whether this proposal is an empty whirlwind of subtle diplomacy or the still, small voice of God. Some have greeted it with derision and distrust; but for one—I have listened to it as to an oracle. I could no more suspect a man in the position of the Czar of trifling with so serious a matter before the whole human race, than before the eyes of the heart-searching God. If he is not in earnest, he is the most colossal fool, or the most despicable villain the world has ever seen.

Without the least pretense of being able to divine his motives, I claim the privilege of believing in the Czar's sincerity, and I summon all trustful people, who put their confi-

Hits and Misses

dence in the good of human nature and the power of the Prince of Peace, to give him their humble and their hearty aid.

The possibility of the disarmament of nations, the destruction of militarism, and the coming of a bloodless era of good will, is worthy of our consideration.

Let us thoughtfully balance over against each other, the reasons which experience has afforded for believing that war is to be the permanent condition of human life, and that its ultimate condition may be one of peace.

The arguments for supposing that men must fight as long as the race lives, are numerous and impressive. They are the minor chords in the sweet, sad music of humanity.

There has never been a moment since history preserved a record of events, when all the world has been at peace. The warriors are always on the stage. One struggle does not cease before another begins. The echoes of cannon and of musket, the moans of wounded and of dying are never absent from our ears. If what "has been" affords a clew to what "must be," it is as certain that we must fight, as that we must labor—to exist. No wonder that De Vogue exclaimed, "All experience and history teaches that war cannot be altogether suppressed so long as two men are left on

Adam-Zad, or the Truce of the Bear

earth with a crust of bread, a piece of money and a woman—between them.”

Wars have been, in many instances at least, among the most beneficent influences in the progress of civilization. A hundred bloody and terrible conflicts could be selected which the blindest advocate of peace would not dare eliminate from history. Who would have the temerity to wish the American Revolution had never occurred?

Say what we will, and stagger as we will, the conviction is forced upon us that in the rude and undeveloped periods, before men had begun to let the ape and tiger die, such customs as idolatry, polygamy and slavery have been necessary phases of the great upward march of humanity. They have saved men from evils worse than themselves. And so has war. Without war (so far at least as we can see) tyranny would have been an eternal form of government, and injustice the eternal law of life. “War,” said de Maistre, “is divine by virtue of its supernatural results.” And no logic has yet been developed to prove that what has done so much good is necessarily wrong. “Until you can prove that a single blow in self-defense is wrong, you cannot prove that a compound blow in self-defense is wrong.”

Man is a fighting animal. There are explo-

Hits and Misses

sives in every subterranean chamber of his soul. A cannon asleep on a parapet may dream that it is a plowshare or a cradle—until the gunner pulls the lanyard. And a man dreams that he hates war until he smells powder or sees gore. In every drop of masculine blood the virus of battle boils. The love of the sword seems as ineradicable as that of the money bag. We are as keen to military glory as our fathers were. You who *hate* war, are *thrilled* by it as a harp string by a master's hand. Who shall deliver me from this inheritance of countless generations of Indian fighters and buccaneers and crusaders and marauders? "War and Niagara thunder to a music of their own," and our pulses thunder with them.

The world is prepared for war and dreaming of war to-day as never in its history. There was more and bloodier fighting in the days of Tamerlane and Genghis Khan, but those monsters would have turned pale at the sight of the armies and navies of modern Europe. War is in the air as well as in the blood. And suppose that the nations of the earth should decide to lay their armors off and hang them in the banquet hall! How could it be done? What would become of these millions of soldiers when they left their camps, and what would become of the peaceful workers whom

Adam-Zad, or the Truce of the Bear

they would crowd from bench and loom and forge? Here *is* a political problem for the peace propagandist! And if this problem would baffle the political economist, another would paralyze the statesman. There are certain questions of government which nothing but war has ever been able to decide, and we tremble at the suspicion that there always *will* be. For one man who says, "the pen is mightier than the sword," a hundred declare that what you write with the pen fades, but what you write with the sword stays. Down deep in the heart of every prince and every peasant, every soldier and every sage, lurks the belief or the suspicion that "might" of government is the only available standard of "right." Every nation is a fighting machine and the strongest wins and rules and lasts. It is a dread suspicion that questions are never settled until they are settled with a gun! But it is hard to escape it, and the fear that *arbitration* is only a subterfuge for *warbitration*, and that under the mask of the statesman, you will always find a soldier—haunts and unsettles us as we try to dream of universal peace.

So much, then, for the fears of the perpetuity of war.

Now for the hopes of the downfall of mili-

Hits and Misses

tarism. Are there any? Are there major chords, as well as minor ones? Let us listen.

There is in the heart of humanity a growing consciousness of the horror of war. The little rills of sympathy and pity are filling up a mighty reservoir. The love of battle is being counteracted by the hate of blood. The glory of war is being offset by its shame. The sentiments with which men looked on the dead who covered the decks of the Spanish fleet at Santiago are fifty per cent milder than those with which they regarded the corpses on the decks of the galleons at Salamis. When before, in the history of humanity, did the world ever hear an exclamation like that from the lips of Captain Philip of the Texas, "Don't cheer, boys, the poor devils are dying!" At the rate at which this feeling of tenderness is growing, the day will come when it will be as impossible for man to contemplate a battlefield, as for old Telemachus to witness a gladiatorial combat in an arena.

You have only to recall the cruelties which this sentiment has already abolished, to see its power. Study the projet of the Brussels conference and the convention of Geneva. The use of poison or of poisoned weapons, the treacherous murder of enemy subjects, the killing of an unarmed enemy, the refusal to give

Adam-Zad, or the Truce of the Bear

quarter, the causing of unnecessary suffering or destruction of property, the abuse of the flag of truce or of the wearers of the cross—all these have become impossible because the refined sensibilities of men cannot endure them. A Libby prison would be as inconceivable in a fin-de-siecle war, as another "murder of the innocents." Our victorious Nation has just revealed that it had no stomach even to take an "indemnity!" If this goes on we shall become as incapable of fighting as doves. Our battles will be as bloodless as Don Quixote's.

There is a growing sense of the suicidal results of the maintenance of enormous standing armies. It is becoming preposterous because impossible. "The great nations of Europe are dying of hunger so as to procure means of killing each other," exclaimed Frederic Passy, and Enrico Ferri declared that they will soon be unable to support the armor in which they are encasing themselves, for lack of adequate nutrition!

Into such a hideous contradiction and dilemma are the races permitting themselves to be forced! It is necessary to strike with the sword to live, but it is impossible to nourish the arm because of the cost of the weapon! The armor will have to *support* upon his feet, the starving and emaciated soldier whom it *envelopes*!

Hits and Misses

Like Alice's cat, which became all smiles, society will become all army!

Well, nature is automatic in her operations. She will cure militarism by poverty and hunger. A full stomach may mean an empty scabbard, but an empty stomach will also mean a full scabbard! It will some time be as necessary to *disarm* in order to *exist*, as it is now to *arm* in order to *subsist*.

There is a growing intimacy and intricacy in the relationships sustained by the nations of the earth to each other, which constantly renders war more difficult and dangerous. The consciousness of the solidarity of interests among them all is deepening, and a new sense of brotherhood is awakening in this consciousness. A few years ago China and India might have torn each other to pieces and the welfare of the world would have suffered scarcely more than when two thunder clouds met and burst. But to-day, so intimate is the relationship existing between all lands, so inextricably are the commercial interests interwoven, that a war in any part of the world sends a shiver to every other. So delicate is the equilibrium of national forces that it is in a permanent state of instability, and a scrimmage on a frontier between two unknown tribes of savages is as dangerous to the political explosives in the

Adam-Zad, or the Truce of the Bear

council chambers of the world, as the scratching of a match or the blow of a hammer in a dynamite mill.

There is a growing sensitiveness to the essential unreason of a chronic state of war. Men are becoming incapable of entertaining the idea of an eternal butchery and a perpetual militarism as a philosophic theory. The bare possibility that such a state can continue forever and be the normal condition of the life of rational beings, excites an increasing mental horror. The race would at length be driven to suicide by such philosophy. It is too horrible! The universal consciousness could not endure the strain of a conviction that a system of such bitterness and horror and devastation was the condition of existence!

But stronger than all, is that ever clarifying ideal of an ultimate millennium, in the soul of the universal humanity, which has been haunted by a dream of peace for many centuries. A true "city of God" swims before it. This vision never dies! And dreams, ideals and visions always conquer! As surely as matter must yield at last to the touch of spirit, destiny must be molded by the visions in the soul! These visions are taking possession of new thousands of individuals every year and of new millions every century! No reasoning discourages it,

Hits and Misses

and no doubt represses it. It is a faith, an instinct in the soul, and it was implanted by its Creator. It is not to be distrusted because we cannot conceive it as accomplished. It is not to be distrusted because we cannot foresee the method of its attainment, nor conceive the contrary of a condition of war.

The savage Indians who were continually cutting each other's throats in the dim glades of our aboriginal forests could not have formed a mental concept of millions of people living together on their battlefields in perfect peace and quietness. And yet the advance from that condition of savage warfare to ours of civilized peace, was a thousand fold more difficult than will be the progress from the condition of the struggling nations of to-day to the period when war shall be known no more forever.

The dream abides! The vision beatific floats before the inner eye!

And every century of progress brings it more within the range of comprehension, for more and more the ape and tiger are dying in us. It will be no harder for us to emancipate ourselves from war than from other mighty incubuses and nightmares of evil. Look at what civilization has outgrown! Do you imagine that when humanity lived in a state of polygamy or slavery or idolatry, it knew how it was

Adam-Zad, or the Truce of the Bear

to secure its liberation? It is within the memory of most of us now present, that the conception of the elimination of slavery from life seemed as impossible as the conception of the elimination of drunkenness or adultery. And yet it is gone! Gone like a mist, a cloud! Gone from America! gone from Europe! gone from Russia! driven to the jungles of Africa, and, like some mythical hydra-headed monster, breathing its last gasps in the recesses of those impenetrable forests!

Nothing is to be conceived as impossible because we cannot imagine how it is to be accomplished. It is not necessary that we should conceive how these evils are to be removed. Their destruction is wrought by that omnipotent power that is working through our human nature as silently and irresistibly as through atoms and rain drops and seeds. How easily the most stupendous miracles are wrought by omnipotence! "How are we ever to rid ourselves of this fearful pall of ice and snow that wraps us in a winding sheet of death?" wail the rivers, lakes, and plains!

It is not necessary that they should know. God will solve their problems for them. With one warm kiss of light he sets them wholly free!

And he performs his ministry of evolution

Hits and Misses

into life, as easily as that of emancipation from death.

"How are we ever to clothe our naked limbs with vernal robes, and decorate the floor on which we stand with flowers again?"—the forests moan, when wintry winds go howling through them.

They cannot do it by themselves. But, with one slow tilt of the old earth on its axis, God turns its face a little more toward the sun. And lo, the sap asleep within the frozen ducts awakes and winds along its ways. On every limb and every branch ten thousand thousand buds appear, and swell and burst, and lo!

"Nature hangs her mantle green
On every living blooming tree,
And spreads her sheet, of daisies white,
Out o'er the flowering lea."

"Comes the spring, with all its splendor,
All its buds and all its blossoms,
All its flowers and leaves and grasses."

"How am I to slough off my old vices?" cries humanity. God knows!

How am I to adorn myself with new virtues? God knows! How is the millennium to come? He can bring it. Some time he will give the old earth a quiet tilt up to the face of the Sun of Righteousness!

How little we know of the great subterranean movements of life! A colony of ants in

Adam-Zad, or the Truce of the Bear

the hold of a man-of-war knows as much about where it is going as we know which way this old sidereal system is traveling. And who of us all knows what the race is coming to or can measure its progress? I have a notion that these busy millions of men are running back and forth and in and out and round about upon a great, movable platform that slides along upon its way, carrying them so silently with it that they are conscious of no motion but their own. For one, I believe in the platform and in the machinery that moves it; but, more than all in Him who *works* the machinery.

There is a higher power than ward politicians, or even senators and presidents and kings. I pin my faith to the Wonderful, the Councilor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. I believe in the song of the angels and in the Christ. I think the fires are now burning in the forges where the sword is to be beaten into the plowshare and the spear into the pruning hook. I see the kindling flames. I hear the first blows of the sledges, the clang, clang of the mighty hammers.

I do not believe that we know how nor when, but I believe that it is our own duty to be men of peace. I am as sensitive to the fascination of war as any poor, bedeviled human be-

Hits and Misses

ing who is trying to emancipate himself from the brute and tiger; but I confess it with shame. It is the survival of the animal. It is my inheritance from the beast.

But I at least love peace better than war. I prefer the spindle to the saber, *ten thousand times*.

I will never vote for war until every other expedient has been exhausted. It is a last resort. It may be a necessity for centuries to come; but I will never believe in it as the ultimate condition of existence. I will write against it, speak against it, oppose it, smite it, fight it until I die. And when anywhere on earth, whether in a Quaker meeting house or on a Russian throne, a human voice is lifted on behalf of peace, I swear to lend my hand.

Let us cherish the dream. Let us nourish the vision. We may not know how to realize it; but if, as individuals, we are always ready to do our part, the race redemption will some time be accomplished.

The movements of the great flocks of migratory birds are not accomplished by a council and agreement, but each individual obeys an impulse of his own, and so the flight takes place.

Let us see that our own individual hearts are ready, for we can never tell when God shall

Adam-Zad, or the Truce of the Bear

give the word for the swarming millions to move up to a higher plane. And we shall go, not by council or agreement, but by moving individual units.

And now, if you are ready, let us sign our names to these cards, and send our blessing and the offer of our help to the mighty monarch who has conceived the colossal design of a universal disarmament.

The Most Common is the Most
Sacred

*"Diving and finding no pearls in the sea,
Blame not the ocean, the fault is in thee."*

"In every experience there is good. A geode is a rough stone on its exterior, but inside are beautiful crystals."

*"This I beheld, or dreamed it in a dream:
There spread a cloud of dust along a plain;
And underneath the cloud, or in it, raged
A furious battle, and men yelled, and swords
Shocked upon swords and shields. A prince's banner
Wavered, then staggered backward, hemmed by foes.
A craven hung along the battle's edge
And thought—'Had I a sword of keener steel—
That blue blade that the King's son bears—but this
Blunt thing!' He snapt and flung it from his hand,
And, lowering, crept away and left the field.
Then came the King's son, wounded, sore bestead
And weaponless, and saw the broken sword,
Hilt buried in the dry and trodden sand,
And ran and snatched it, and with battle shout
Lifted afresh, he hewed his enemy down
And saved a great cause on that heroic day."*

—Edward Rowland Sill.

What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.—Acts x, 15.

The Apostle Peter experienced through his contact with Jesus Christ, three sudden and wonderful awakenings. First, when it dawned upon him that he actually stood in the presence of the Son of God.

Second, when he was struck as by lightning with the guilty consciousness of his depravity in his desertion of his Friend.

Third, when in this bewildering vision upon the housetop, he learned that his whole conception of the vulgarity and badness of common things, had been erected upon a stupid and radical misconception.

As a matter of fact, all mental or spiritual enlargement is the resultant of a series of such rude awakenings—in each one of which the old foundations crumble, and the old horizons are violently thrust backward. These awakenings are always surprising, often painful, but in the long run are always redemptive and beatific.

Without wasting our time in vain repetitions

Hits and Misses

of a familiar narrative, let us seize upon the essential fact of this experience.

The Apostle had yielded to the soporific influence of a balmy breeze which blew across a Syrian housetop, and sunk into a slumber. He carried with him into the world of dreams an undisturbed assurance that certain kinds of food, and certain kinds of actions, and certain kinds of people were essentially common, vulgar, and profane. He believed that they contained an indwelling element of evil which condemned *them* in its existence, and would contaminate *him* by their contact.

Somehow and somewhere in that realm of slumber, the unreasonableness and the wickedness of this idea was flashed upon his consciousness, and he saw that evil did not dwell in *things*, but *souls*!

(Life would be vastly easier, let me say by way of parenthesis, if the tatters of decayed and worn out vestments of thought could fall off quietly in our sleep, rather than be torn off like living flesh in our waking hours!)

When Peter awoke (every enlightenment, remember, is an awakening) he was a different man. In that brief hour of dreams the cherished convictions of a lifetime had vanished like a mist. That narrow and bigoted conception of the relations of the profane and

The Most Common is the Most Sacred

the sacred which had clung to him even through his contact with the Christ fell away like the old skin of a snake in the springtime.

It would be impossible to imagine a mental revolution more bewildering. He fell asleep a sectarian. He awoke a cosmopolitan. He was transformed from a bigot to a man almost in the twinkling of an eye. Deterioration of mind is always gradual, but recovery usually sudden.

To the enlightened and astonished Apostle a whole realm of vulgar places, persons and things, were suddenly consecrated and shrouded in a halo of glory and beauty. God had made them holy! Who was he that he should call them profane?

His entire mental and moral attitude being thus reversed toward these articles of food and clothing, toward these places and people, he began to regard them with a new tenderness and sympathy—as Francis de Assissi did the birds and flowers after he had embraced the Christ, calling *them*, “our little brothers the birds and our little sisters the flowers.”

This change of mind and heart stands out before us to-day, my friends, as the permanent type of that transformation through which all men everywhere must pass, in proportion as the spirit of our Divine Master pervades and possesses them. In a series of visions following

Hits and Misses

each other like the panels of a panorama, God discloses to his true children—that there is something holy and adorable in the heart of all his works, no matter how deep it lies below the surface—and the rapidity with which we make these discoveries, measures our growth in at least *one* of the graces of Christ!

And we must not for a moment mistake the true nature of this change! It does not lie in the object beheld, but in the mind of the beholder; not in the thing seen, but the eye seeing. The alteration is so immense and startling at times, that it seems to us as if the whole visible universe had undergone some mighty transformation. But it is not so!

A few days ago a lady who was seated upon her porch was horrified to see an electric car go crashing over a careless little poodle dog. Torn almost to pieces but not killed, the wretched victim crawled out from under this modern Juggernaut and dragged his bleeding and trembling body to her feet. His cries, his wounds, his mangled form excited in her sensitive nature an uncontrollable feeling of loathing and disgust. She rose and fled into the house; but in a moment more (impelled by that divine instinct of pity which God has planted so deeply in all good women's hearts), she opened the door, permitted the trembling

The Most Common is the Most Sacred

creature to enter, took him into her hands, carried him to the kitchen, bathed him, bound up his gaping wounds, listened to his plaintive moans, permitted him to kiss her cheek, looked down into the eyes in which the fires of gratitude were fairly glowing, and finally—pressed him to her heart! She did not see him as he really *was*, after that uprush of love from the subterranean chambers of her soul! He was still a mangled and repulsive cur; but now that she saw him through those *other* eyes, he had been transformed and glorified to her vision!

Such was the change that took place in Peter, and when he went down to the house of the despised Centurion (the hated Roman soldier, the uncircumcised Philistine), he saw him in a new and holy light. This abhorred man was still a Centurion, a soldier, a Philistine; but he did not *seem* so! What Peter *now* saw was the divine spark that burns in every human soul—the essential elements of his true humanity. He felt that he was every inch a man—and that he was also a son of the living God!

It is of this phenomenon in the lives of the disciples of Jesus Christ that I would speak to you to-day. I wish to press down upon your hearts the truth that when we see life through Christ's eyes—common places, seasons, occupa-

Hits and Misses

tions, persons, *seem* to undergo this curious and wonderful transfiguration.

But I do not wish you for a single instant to misunderstand me. I am not about to declare that there is *nothing* evil in itself! This insane delusion is too old and too palpable to entangle us in its meshes, let me hope! There are thoughts of the human mind and states of the human soul, and deeds of the human hand, and words of the human lips, and glances of the human eye, that cannot be made holy by our *thinking* them to be so! There are fixed limitations to the principle "*Honi soit qui mal y pense!*" There are some things which can no more be made good by *thinking*, than clay can be made soft by *roasting*! Covetousness, worldliness, hypocrisy, drunkenness, adultery, cannot be sanctified by *thought*, any more than the Devil can be by holy water!

No power in the universe can alter its complexion, or consecrate—a lie! If all the angels in heaven should combine to manipulate it through some splendid ritual, and by the imposition of their holy hands or the total immersion of it in the waters of some sacred river attempt to turn it into a truth, they could not succeed! It would still remain a lie, and hiss like a coal from the fires of hell when it touched the sacred stream! And what the angels can-

The Most Common is the Most Sacred

not do, we had better not attempt! When men organize their business and when women constitute their societies in the hope that splendid buildings and gracious manners and elegant customs will make impurity clean, and vice virtuous, and falsehoods truthful, they are not only doomed to ignominious failure, but to some form of damnation that will disclose to them at last the real nature of unrighteousness.

Christian philosophy does not veil the element of evil. Christian charity does not disguise the true nature of sin. It extends allowance to men, but not to falsehoods and crimes *themselves*. "It does not look with equal complacency upon all men and things, and with a sort of animal sympathy lick every sore of humanity that lies at its gate!"

You see that I do *not* mean that a man can change a thing which is evil into one that is good, by changing its name or changing his thought about it—and now it is time to tell you more clearly what I *do* mean.

The thing I mean is this—that in a thousand and one things and places and times and occupations and people which seem to us vulgar, common and unclean, there is something divinely beautiful, and that when our eyes are opened we shall see it as Peter did, in the food

Hits and Misses

which he had abhorred and the people he had despised.

Let us take these objects up and see if beneath that thin veneer which lies roughly upon their surface, there is not to be found this underlying beauty.

Take common *places* first.

Those who live in localities which have never been made famous by great and glorious deeds and lives, are all but oblivious to anything divine about them; but wonderful as it is that we can be so blind, it is a still more startling fact that those who live by the very *tombs of the prophets* become gradually insensible to that very element which attracts and fascinates the pilgrim! It is only *distance* that lends enchantment to our view! A place to be sacred must be remote, and to be near is synonymous with being vulgar. It is only in some far away Palestine that God's glory has been revealed (we think), and we flatter ourselves that if we were there, that glory would flash resistlessly and ceaselessly upon our view.

It is a fatal heresy! The sacred presence does not abide in closets dedicated to prayer and temples set apart for worship *alone*.

The nursery where we soothe a child to sleep, the kitchen, the blacksmith shop, the side hill farm, the dingy, dirty mill, the crowded

The Most Common is the Most Sacred

store, the old familiar street, are all instinct with it, and if you do not see it there, you could not see it elsewhere! You who cannot hear God's stately steppings in the thunder of traffic in the street, and in the dull rumble of the cars along the iron rails, would not have heard them in the footfalls of Jesus Christ along the shores of Galilee, for it is not in the *sound*, but in the *ear*, that sacredness exists! There is no spot on earth so plain, so dull, but it is drenched with this *dew* of sacredness. Every foot of earth is consecrated ground. The Son of Man would have felt the thrill of the divine presence on an Arabian desert as palpably as on the Milky Way! Every shrub is a flaming bush, every river a Jordan, every little quiet nook where flowers grow and grasses rustle in the breeze, a garden of Gethsemane to him whose soul has passed through the change that came to Peter. The most of us require an orchestra of sixty pieces to awaken our musical sensibilities; but hand a printed score to men like Seidl and Thomas, and those black (and to us illegible) ink marks will stir them to raptures and to tears!

There *is* no common place!

Take common *times*!

How tame, how dull, how uneventful is the age in which we live! If this even tenor is

Hits and Misses

disturbed by something startling, we soon eliminate that unfamiliar element and reduce it all to the old dead level of monotony. And however *strange* it seems, we scarcely dream it may be sacred! *That* element exists for us in other ages only. We put the golden age back into the past and the millennium forward into the future. The present is stupid, dull, profane. It never occurs to us that at any common hour of any common day, there might come to open eyes and ears disclosures of the divine presence that *always* haunts these scenes! We think that they belong to the eras of the prophets, sages, seers and apostles—in the dim and distant past.

We ought to understand, that the man who does not perceive the sacredness of life and the divinity of being in this noisy nineteenth century could not by any possibility have seen it in the first! This was the truth that Ruskin spent his life in driving home. "If," said he, "we are to do anything great, good, awful, religious, it must be got out of our own little island and out of this year 1846—railroads and all! If a British painter (I say this in earnest seriousness) cannot make historical characters out of the House of Peers, he cannot paint history, and if he cannot make a Madonna out of

The Most Common is the Most Sacred

a British girl of the Nineteenth Century, he cannot paint them at all."

Nor will the man who does not perceive this indwelling glory in *every one* of the six secular days of the week perceive it on the Holy Sabbath. It is not the stillness in the village street, but the stillness in the schoolboy's soul that gives that holy calm to the world on every Sabbath day. A *sacred* day! A *holy* day! What day, what hour, what moment is *not* sacred? What one not fitted for a revelation? Is it that solemn period when the sun goes forth like a bridegroom from his chamber; when it hangs like the eye of God above the world at noon; when the curtain falls at dewy eve and ushers in the solemn hush that ushers in the solemn night; when the imperishable stars look down from the vast depths of the infinite and whisper their incommunicable secrets?

There *are* no common times!

Take common *occupations*.

We call them common, but they are *not*, for every one that is honest, received its consecration on that morning when God sent man forth to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow! We speak of secular callings! But there ARE none. The men who *think* them so, and yearn for that *mental elevation* which they dream of

Hits and Misses

as inhering by some thaumaturgical efficacy in "the *sacred* callings," are deluded.

"If I could only dwell among my books all through the week and on the Sabbath stand in the sacred desk and propound the results of my study to eager listeners; if I could baptize little children, marry young lovers, distribute the communion bread and wine, kneel down by the side of the dying, speak words of consolation to the sorrowing; then, then, I could feel the thrill of the sacredness of life!" you say, but are mistaken.

You would not feel the sacredness of *my* life, for example, if you do not of your *own*! There is nothing in the calling itself of the minister or priest to infuse these feelings into your soul. No one in all the world has ever regarded life as being so utterly and nauseatingly empty as those who in weary and soulless moments have discharged these sacred functions! There come times to every minister, priest, prophet, apostle when every word he utters rings hollowly, like sounding brass or tinkling cymbal, when his most solemn deeds are perfunctory and dead, when God is farther away than the polar star! Many a time, believe me, Jehovah seemed nearer to some humble worshipper that had brought to the altar a turtle dove and two young pigeons in

The Most Common is the Most Sacred

some moment of aspiration or self-surrender, than to the poor High Priest who carried into the Holy of Holies an empty, a broken, or a sinful heart!

And the same sad truth sounds home in the heart of the poor drudge who digs in the sewer and dreams that if he could sit in the banker's chair or stand at the table of the scientist, he could perceive a sacredness in life which hides itself in the damp vapors which he breathes. His thought is false to history, to reason, to experience! Moses was feeding his flocks when he saw the burning bush. Saul was seeking his father's asses when the prophetic afflatus seized him. David was a fugitive, Amos a herdsman, Paul a tentmaker, and the Christ a carpenter. And yet through these dreary tasks, as through a lens of mighty power and crystal clearness, they beheld that halo of glory which hangs eternally over life.

There *are* no common occupations.

Take common *people*!

We pass our lives, perhaps, among the poor, the ignorant, the depraved. Their low brows, their vulgar talk, their uncouth manners repel and offend us! They utter no sentiments that give us elevated thoughts, they do no deeds that make us long to be heroes. We experience a disgust and loathing in their

Hits and Misses

presence. We learn to despise our common humanity. If we could only associate with poets, with judges, with scientists, with women of culture and men of learning, we flatter ourselves that we should not only catch glimpses, but have visions of that divinity that dwells in man.

We are mistaken! If we do not discover it in roustabouts and draymen, we would not in savants and sages! Who do you think cherished the loftiest conceptions of human nature, Herod or John the Baptist, Dives or Lazarus, Pilate or Jesus Christ? The kings dwelt among those who wore purple and fine linen, and who fared sumptuously every day, who read books, fought battles, governed states; and the prophets associated with taxgatherers, fishermen, publicans, carpenters, criminals, and demoniacs, and yet *they* were the ones who saw the divine in the human.

To the *first*, men were dogs; to the *second*, the children of the living God! "All men are liars," said Solomon from his throne, about princes and potentates. "Ye are my friends!" exclaimed a greater than Solomon from his couch by a low table in an upper room, about publicans and sinners.

The "*common people*"! Odious distinction! There *are* no common people. The degrada-

The Most Common is the Most Sacred

tion is in the eye of the beholder! Cornelius is one man to the soul of Peter the bigot at noon, and quite another to Peter the Christian at dusk.

My friends, how is it with *you*? Is the sacredness of life eluding you, or, rather, are you overlooking *it*? Is that holy something which inheres in all places, times, occupations, and people, invisible to you through your ignorance, prejudice and sin? Could I ask any better gift for you than that your eyes should be opened to all this grandeur, all this glory? Is it too much to say, "the multitudes are blind?" How few are quick and keen to those tender, sacred elements which lie in every trivial incident of life or object of the universe!

A few days ago a pale little lad, who was making a long and lonesome journey in a railroad train, was noticed by a fellow traveler to be gazing wistfully toward a seat where a mother and a brood of children were merrily eating their lunch. The tears gathered in his eyes, though he bravely tried to suppress them, and all unconsciously he heaved a sigh.

"Are you hungry, my little man?" said the observant traveler.

"No, sir, I have a lunch of my own," he answered heavily.

Hits and Misses

"What is the matter then? Tell me and perhaps I can help you."

"I am so lonely, and they seem so happy over there, and then they've got—they've got their mother."

"And you have lost yours?"

"Yes, sir, and I am going to an uncle's whom I have never seen."

"How are you finding your way to him alone?"

"A kind lady, who paid my fare, tied this card around my neck. You may read it if you wish."

The stranger did so, and these were the solemn and beautiful words: "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water *only*, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward."

He turned away to hide a tear, stepped across the aisle and whispered a few words to the mother of the children.

She listened eagerly, rose impulsively from her seat, hurried toward the little orphan, and in a moment had folded him to her heart and was sobbing over him and murmuring broken words of love and tenderness.

Now mark you, there was only one man in the whole car who penetrated into the holy

The Most Common is the Most Sacred

secrets of the grief of this little waif. To all the rest of those absorbed or stupid people this deep and tender drama was passing unobserved. It escaped the eye of even this *mother*. And yet tragedies are transpiring all around us, in which lie the revelations of the deep and holy elements of our common human nature. We need the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the feeling heart. Do you not often catch brief and fugitive glimpses of this hidden sacredness in the faces of men, in the occupations of life, in the common scenes and places? I do. I stood the other day in Burnet Woods and gazed at the summit of a hill along which stood a sentinel line of birches, the brown leaves still clinging scantily to their bared limbs in shreds and patches like the worn garments of half naked beggars. I had looked long at them in one of those fits of abstraction in which the soul seems unconsciously to be yearning for and searching after the secrets of the universe, and after that spiritual beauty which lurks in every landscape, when suddenly it flashed upon me for an instant and was gone. I cannot describe it. I could not recall it. It had vanished utterly; but I know that I had *seen* it! My heart bounded, my bosom heaved, my eyes filled with tears. I had touched in some way the hem of the garment of the Divine Spirit of

Hits and Misses

life. It was a mystery, but it was a reality, and I have perceived it often in places and times, and occupations, and people, but it flits as quickly as it appears.

What I long for is the capacity to *retain* the vision. For the power to make the evanescent glimpse abide, to see at all times and in all places that sacred holy something which makes us feel that we are always in the presence of the Divine—this is the greatest gift or acquisition of life.

To him whose spirit possesses this power, each place on which he stands is holy ground, each hour through which he moves is holy time, each task which he performs is holy toil, each human form he sees, a temple of the living God.

If this is alien to your thought, my friend, if it sounds unreal, if it awakens incredulity, it proves that your soul is still asleep. And if you desire to see more than you now see, and feel more than you now feel of this indwelling sacredness of life and being, look through the eyes of Jesus Christ. He is the great Seer! The interior natures of all things were open to his penetrating gaze.

Suppose that in walking through the Louvre or Vatican you should come upon John Ruskin, or Burne Jones, or Millet, would you not ex-

The Most Common is the Most Sacred

pect them to point you out a thousand hidden beauties on those walls?

Suppose that with untrained eyes you were walking in a quarry or a cañon and should meet Hugh Miller or Agassiz. Do you not realize that through their eyes would come to you revelations of the hidden teachings and secrets of those rocks that would widen your horizon and extend your vision indefinitely?

Well, a greater than these is here! To his clarified vision the inner splendors were all revealed. There was nothing common in his sight. The rippling lakes, the running brooks, the sower casting his seed, the bird singing his matin song, the flower blooming in hidden dells, the mother nursing her child, the widow lamenting her son, the fisherman casting his net—in all and each, there was that supernal loveliness one glimpse of which transfigures us with joy.

Look through those eyes!

Laying a Modern Specter

"The reward of one duty is the power to fulfil another."

—George Eliot.

"Man is only what he becomes—profound truth; but he becomes only what he is—truth still more profound."

—Amiel.

"Make what contortions a man will, he can only bring to light his own individuality."

—Goethe.

"While the multitude imagines itself to live by its false science, it does really live by its true religion."

—Matthew Arnold.

"The great function of environment is not to modify; but to sustain. . . . In the organism lies the principle of life."

—Drummond.

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.—Phil. ii, 15.

We can put the whole thought of this text in a brief paraphrase.

“My friends, you are in circumstances most unfavorable to the divine life. Nevertheless, I bid you attain it. Be greater than the influences which surround you. The tide sets away from Christ and holiness. No matter! Stem the current! Everywhere the minds of men are full of darkness. Well, all the same, let yours be light. Other men are bad—be thou good!”

If St. Paul were speaking to a modern audience, he would seize upon the word environment. He would say, “Your environment is indeed unfavorable; but you must be superior to it.”

This stern imperative of the great apostle raises the old, old question, *Can* a man be superior to his environment, or is he really its victim?

Hits and Misses

It is a question which no age can settle for the next, and no man settle for another. It is as fresh, terrible, and important for you and for me as if no one else had ever grappled with it.

Let us take it up once more.

Modern science has summoned from the "vasty deep" of thought two age-old spirits to which she has given the names of Heredity and Environment. These twin genii have wrapped their sinuous folds around men as the serpents did theirs around Laocoon and his sons. They have choked more aspirations and stifled more hopes than all the other foes which have attacked human happiness in the age in which we live. Everywhere men are excusing their weaknesses and failures by saying to themselves, "I have been born with inherited defects which I can no more overcome than I can change the color of my hair," or, "I am surrounded by influences which shape me in the same resistless way as climate does the form and color of flora or fauna."

Now, all knowledge must be classified before it can be useful, and ideas themselves must submit to be catalogued. Fear of them often vanishes when they are discovered to be old foes in other feathers.

It is somewhere recorded that a mischievous

Laying a Modern Specter

medical student once beguiled a little newsboy into a doctor's office under pretense of wishing to buy a morning paper. While the young merchant stood gazing about the room, the young scholar touched a secret spring. A door flew open in the wall, and a human skeleton appeared. With a wild whoop of terror the child rushed out into the street, and reassured by sunlight and open space, stood cursing the building and its occupants. The commotion and the profanity aroused the old doctor. Emaciated and wan with a long life of ceaseless toil, he rushed to the door and fiercely rebuked the profane swearer.

"You can't fool me, even if you *have* got your clothes on," shrieked the boy, and ran.

Well, Heredity and Environment have got on other clothes; but beneath this surface change you may recognize the Fate and Destiny of Antiquity; and for one I propose to stand my ground and face them! Let us divide and conquer! We will take environment to-day.

Is environment stronger than man, or can a man really be blameless in the midst of evil surroundings? Can he illuminate the moral darkness around him, or will it eventually extinguish his light?

I should not be here to-day if I did not be-

Hits and Misses

lieve in the superiority of the soul to all its foes; and yet a man who did not comprehend, or who should disparage the fearful power of environment upon all forms of life, would not deserve and could not gain your confidence. Modern science has given us too many clear and convincing proofs of its colossal power, to permit us to doubt.

Schwankewitsch, a Russian scientist, having found that a certain Phyllopod Crustacean occurring in the salt vats of Southern Russia, when the brine was weakened, was transformed into a distinct species, began to freshen the water *gradually*. The change grew more and more marked, until after several generations (not of thirty-three years; but of some thirty-three hours), the antennæ had been so altered in form, a joint so completely lost from the abdomen, and other changes so great produced, that it had not only passed from one *species* to another, but into an absolutely different *genus*!

And this is only a single illustration from a single realm of being, of that terrific force with which environment is continually altering the forms of flowers, trees, fishes, birds, animals, and every living thing.

Having seen this marvelous and universal process so thoroughly revealed, it is no wonder

Laying a Modern Specter

that *we* "frail children of dust, and feeble as frail," should at last look up to the stars and out upon the sea, and contemplate a climate which we cannot change, and a geography which we cannot alter, and forces which grind over us like those of glaciers and tides; and feel that we, too, are as helpless as the Phyllopod Crustaceans, and that whenever some gigantic hand freshens the water or salts it, *our* antennæ will be changed, and we shall be shifted from species to species and genus to genus.

Such a fear is natural. It is founded upon facts too palpable to be denied. Environment is a stupendous power. Let it be altered a little, and we shall be changed somewhat. Let it be altered completely, and we shall be changed altogether, or perhaps disappear entirely.

But the consciousness of this truth has become too intense. It has assumed exaggerated proportions and importance. In reflecting upon the power of *environment*, we have forgotten the power of *soul*!

In reality, there are two forces which interact upon each other, and you cannot comprehend the problem without understanding the values of x and y both. If x is environment and y soul, then let it be remembered that not only does x act upon y , but y acts upon x !

Hits and Misses

I bid you then remember that the soul is a force! And it now becomes our duty to study by the strictest methods of inductive science the power of the soul to affect environment. Our investigation will be nothing but a review, and may be compressed into a single sentence. Soul, spirit, mentality, man (whatever be the name you call it by) has leveled mountains, drained marshes, split continents with canals, turned deserts into gardens, and gardens to deserts, denuded vast plateaus of their forests, shifted the beds of rivers, diminished or increased rainfalls, and transformed climates that were as hot as furnaces to those that were cool, and sweet, and tolerable.

In short, the little Phyllopod in the tank has dictated the movements of the mighty hand that opened the sluiceway! "It is too fresh! It is too salt! I will not have it," he cries, and the gates rise or fall at his bidding. And now I say, that if human pride needs to be humiliated by the consciousness that it is subject to higher powers, human terror needs to be allayed by remembering that many of these higher powers are subject to human will.

There are multitudes of individual units in every community who need to be told plainly and confidently that the environment before which they tremble is a bugaboo, and that they

Laying a Modern Specter

must arise in the power of their free might to alter and to conquer it.

I submit to the consideration of such people the three following propositions :

Man's power to alter his environment is proportioned

I. To the fullness of his self-consciousness.

II. To the fullness of his self-confidence.

III. To the fullness of his self-consecration.

I. We are in the first place then to show that man's power to alter his environment is proportioned to his self-consciousness, and at the very outset, discover that only a small proportion of us ever attain to any considerable degree of that knowledge of ourselves which possesses this potency.

Little children, for example, have no self-consciousness at all. They have not the remotest conception that there is any distinction at all between themselves and the rest of the world. They know nothing whatever of an ego which is different from their environment. A rag doll knows as much difference between itself and its little two-year-old mistress as she does between herself and her mother! The nursing infant never in its *thought* separated itself from its mother's bosom, even when in *act* it *did* detach itself. Its entire relation to the outside world or its environment is gov-

Hits and Misses

earned by a few primal instincts, and not by any self-conscious effort.

Of *course* it is victimized! Fires burn it, doors pinch it, cats scratch it, dogs bite it. But slowly, painfully, certainly, this helpless creature does begin to detach itself in thought from its mother's breast, its father's hand, and all the multitudinous objects in the *not me* world. And just in proportion as it comes to know the ego as distinct from the non-ego, becomes acquainted with its powers, and realizes its capacities, it begins to act back on that by which it is acted upon. It strikes, it bites, it pinches, it kicks; and its environment begins to dodge! It is because the savage is an unconscious child that he has affected his environment so little. He has not in thought differentiated himself from his environment enough to react upon it profoundly. In a sense he is like the horse, the lion, or the ass. He moves amidst the forces and elements of his habitat, animated by a few primal instincts, and while struggling blindly against the most palpable of his foes, goes down a victim to those which are too subtle and elusive for his discovery. Of course he is their victim!

But with races as with men, power begins with self-discovery. "Gnothi seauton" is the trumpet call to victory. Whenever masses of

Laying a Modern Specter

men have differentiated themselves from the outside world, and turned their powers of analysis and comprehension upon their own souls, its marvelous capacities have been revealed. It is like a boy's discovery that a knife will cut. They try the edge of this invincible weapon, the soul, upon every object within reach. Instantly the foes of its welfare begin to go down before it, and vanish in proportion as that self-consciousness becomes acute and clear.

Do *you* know *yourself*? Have you ever clearly and fully ascertained the indestructibility of your soul, its complex powers, its sublime capacities? Have you ever tested it to its utmost capacity, and found that nothing could conquer it? In no respect do you differ more from the mighty spirits who have defied the embattled hosts of poverty, sickness, misunderstanding, injustice, and misfortune than in not putting your soul to its full proof!

II. In the second place man's power to alter and to triumph over his environment is proportioned to his self-confidence. Self-confidence in its highest and truest form is the product of self-consciousness. It is only when a man has put his soul to the proof, as a soldier does a sword and a sailor does his ship, that he learns at length to trust it utterly. Men like Joshua, Daniel, Paul, Savonarola, John Knox,

Hits and Misses

and Chinese Gordon, have possessed a confidence in their soul's ability to endure and triumph, that nothing could upset. As David trusted his sling, Robin Hood his bow, Cæsar his Prætorian Guard, and Napoleon his star, they trusted in the invincibility and the inviolability of that ethereal essence which we call the soul. They felt that it could find its way out of any labyrinth, it could meet any emergencies, it could surmount all obstacles. Fire could not burn it, water could not drown it, death could not conquer it. Such was the confidence of Wyckliffe when he saw men kindle the fagots with their torches. Such was the confidence of Socrates when the jailer gave him the hemlock.

"In what way will you have us bury you?" said Crito. "In any way you like; only you must get hold of me and be sure I do not walk away from you," he answered, with a calm, expectant smile. This faith that nothing can conquer the soul arouses a sublime confidence that the soul can conquer anything. "I am bigger than anything that can happen to me," said the hero of a Western story.

Get this confidence, and mountains will crumble at your touch. What were Alps to men like Hannibal and Napoleon? What was an ocean to a man like Columbus? There is an

Laying a Modern Specter

energy in a human will which has never been exhausted nor measured. You can measure steam by horse power, and electricity by volts; but where is your unit by which to test what Alexander, Sherman or Dewey will do, when you put them in a pinch?

Do you believe this? Do you possess this sublime confidence in that vital spark of extinguishable flame which burns in your bosom?

III. In the third place, man's power to alter and triumph over his environment is proportioned to his self-consecration. By self-consecration I mean the dedication of the soul to victory over all the foes that threaten its welfare. If self-knowledge is rare, and self-confidence rarer, self-consecration is rarest. How few men do we meet who have risen to this unalterable devotion of themselves to the triumph of mind over matter, of self over not-self! And yet who expects to succeed without it?

Let the idea once gain complete possession of a man that the development of his own nature—the supremacy of the soul over all its foes is possible, and let him give himself to this end as the vestal virgins gave their lives to the altar, and the young Hannibal gave his to vengeance, and nature will retreat and cower like a whipped dog.

I do not mean, of course, that in the long

Hits and Misses

run she will not wear out the engine which is the instrument of this spirit's earthly activities. I do not mean that she will not at last conquer the machine, but that she cannot crush the engineer. I affirm that the man is never conquered until he surrenders. I declare that the soul is invincible as long as it retains its integrity, its nobility, its confidence. Even though it be at last fastened to the chariot wheels of Nature as kings were to those of the Cæsars, it is still a king, if *it walks erect!*

This is the *real* victory.

The soul will attain *more* than this by such dedication. She will see obstacles vanish like mists. She will see environment made plastic to her touch, like clay in the hands of the potter. But the thing which is inviolably certain is that even in her defeat she will be a victor, for she will demonstrate that nothing in her surroundings can extinguish the light, the joy, the hope, the confidence in herself.

It was the glory of the Apostle Paul and of the founders of the Christian religion, that they made the development of the soul itself their one sublime aim. It was their doctrine that it could be superior to *all* that could happen to it, and this doctrine they learned from their Master. Preserve the integrity of the soul, for where *it* is lost *all* is lost; while *it* is

Laying a Modern Specter

safe *all* is safe. Such was his view. Everything may escape you. Everything *will* escape you but your soul. But so long as you possess your soul you have all. What shall it profit if you gain the world and lose your soul? is a reversible interrogation. What shall it harm you if you lose the world and gain your soul?

Have you ever clearly perceived these truths? Have you ever attained this utter consecration of yourself to that victory which overcometh the world? I ask you, you who are discouraged and weak, you who are being driven along like chaff in the wind, you who are floating like a straw in a great river—do you think you would be thus driven and tossed if you should set your will as a sailor sets his rudder in a storm?

Is not the whole trouble with you right here? Then begin at the point of failure. Dedicate yourself to victory. Be the master of your destiny. Determine to triumph over the environment that has thus made you its victim. Match your soul against every foe. Try another fall with the enemies who have overpowered you. Determine that you will conquer and you *will*!

If you *think* yourself to be a shuttlecock between the battledoors of Fate, you *will* be. If you believe that "environment" can extin-

Hits and Misses

guish your light, it *will* extinguish your light. But if you will begin now to believe in the superiority of spirit over matter, immortality over mortality, life over death, you will feel new springs of powers and resistance swell up from the depths of your beings like fountains in a desert. Dedicate yourself to victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And now I ask you whether I have belittled the potent influences of environment unduly? I have not meant to, for no one knows better than I by personal experience its fearful compulsive power. Who has not too often been its victim or its beneficiary to either disparage or ignore it? A few days ago, on my return from my class in the University, I walked through Burnett Woods. The rustle of the leaves under my feet, the dropping of the nuts, the chirping of the squirrels, and the odors of decaying vegetation transported me to the scenes of my boyhood. So powerful was the effect of that scene of almost transcendent beauty as to play my imagination false. Under its potent spell

Laying a Modern Specter

I lost the senses of locality and of time. Once more I was a boy! The trees were those of the grand old forests around my native village. I was tiptoeing along a well-known rabbit track to open the traps I had set the night before. I was climbing the chestnut trees and shaking the nuts from the loosened burrs to the crowd of shouting youngsters beneath. I was watching the squirrels leap from limb to limb, I was gathering the yellow goldenrod and the scarlet sumach in the corners of the stake and rider fences.

In this autumn atmosphere of fantasy, I strolled along until I came upon a party of children who were making the very welkin ring with their noisy shoutings. Their Sunday-school teacher (like some divine Pandora, or a more heavenly Madonna) moved gently and benignantly among them. They romped, they laughed, they played, they shouted, they gathered the scarlet and golden leaves into baskets, or twined them into wreaths and crowns. The birds sang in the trees, the blue dome of heaven bent caressingly over us—life seemed a happy dream. My soul expanded, and my eyes suffused with tears. I said to myself, in half-articulated words, "In such a scene as this one could be always happy."

Such is the influence of environment!

Hits and Misses

But shall I confess?

Five minutes had not passed away, and I was still slowly moving amidst these beautiful holy influences, when I became suddenly and painfully conscious that my thoughts had slipped back into the old channel. The cares of life had once more rolled upon me. The imagination had ceased to act, and the mind was busy with the stern and pressing problems of the present hour. Environment had demonstrated its own incapacity by ceasing to buoy up the heavy heart upon its surface. With one dull plunge it had sunk down into the deeps.

Truly, "the soul is its own place, and of a heaven can make a hell, or hell of heaven." A beautiful environment can no more make a base soul beautiful, unaided and alone, than it can make a beautiful soul base, without that soul's consent.

With all my heart I believe in the beneficence of a good and the bane of a bad environment; but it is because I believe in the power of the self-conscious soul to be superior to both, if it determines that it *will*, that I am here to-day.

My friends, we, too, live in the midst of evil influences like those to whom the Apostle wrote. We pass the time of our sojourn amidst a crooked and perverse generation. But we, too, like them, may be here and now,

Laying a Modern Specter

blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, and may shine as lights in this wicked world.

But in order to do this, you must take these influences by the very throat. You cannot trifle with them. You cannot give them a single inch of rope.

Everywhere you may hear that pitiful and pusillanimous wail that rises from the lips of weak-kneed and feeble-minded men and women: "It is impossible to resist the evil influences of business and society. The current is too strong. We must go with it. The most we can do is to utter a spiritual protest, to show that our souls are at least *conscious* of all the littleness and meanness of life."

It *is* an awful age! The drift away from the old ideals is like that of an ocean current. Everywhere are Sabbath desecration, social gambling, social drinking, commercial dishonor, easy morals, and easier marriage bonds, multitudes of our companions taking the color of their lives from their surroundings, as unresistingly and as indifferently as chameleons.

But while we shrug our shoulders and excuse our susceptibility to these influences, let us ask ourselves what the old Apostle Paul would have done in our places. Right well we know! The influences of this age, which

Hits and Misses

have warped and twisted us all but out of shape, would have bent that lofty soul about as much as a poison-ivy plant the mighty oak round which it twines. These baneful habits would have affected him about as much as the shadow of a crow's wing falling on a rock. Recall his life. Revisit in your imagination the scenes through which he passed. Compare the influences which surround you with those which entangled him in his journeys amidst the cities of the ancient world—the comparatively pure atmosphere which envelops the citizen of an average American town with those mephitic odors which men breathed in Ephesus and Corinth! But he came out of it all as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fires of the furnace.

I think that in our best moments we are seized with a species of self-loathing and contempt for our own weakness. We, who know history, who know life, who know where all these streams of tendency lead at last, who *know* and yet who *drift*! We who permit ourselves to be influenced, to be molded, to be corrupted by these crazy throngs who go to the shambles like silly sheep. And the pitifullest thing about it is that there are so many people of mind, of heart, of soul, so *superior* to those who mold them thus. How con-

Laying a Modern Specter

stantly and with what unutterable sadness do we see those who are naturally high-minded and noble-hearted giving in and giving up to people of base souls and debauched manners! Pitiful surrender! Base contamination! Unholy perversion! It is as if a lion should be persuaded to eat carrion by a jackal!

Now why, let me ask you, should we not mold such people instead of being molded by them? Is there nothing noble and inspiring in exerting the *strongest* influence? Have you never thrilled with the just pride of bowing the will and purpose of a base man to yours, or lifting him up in spite of himself when he tried to drag you down? Why not change your environment instead of being changed by it?

Shame on us! What we need is a Paul or two among us, to show us how a man can really be a master! I can almost hear the words which he would utter if he stood where we are standing now! "Age of unreason, restlessness, senselessness, materialism, sensuality, you may roll over me like a flood, but you cannot budge me from my bed. You may grind over me like a glacier, but you cannot sweep me from my moorings. When you have gone past me I shall still be *here*, deeply anchored, firmly rooted, the same old Paul! There is but one true life, and I propose to live it.

Hits and Misses

There is but one divine ideal, and I am determined to attain it. You can deride me, you can reject me, you can abuse me, you can impoverish me, you can crucify me again, if you want to, but *change* me you *cannot*! My heart is fixed! To be pure, to be true, to be honest, to be a righteous man, to live for God as Jesus did, this is my fixed and unalterable determination. Rocks shall fly from their firm base sooner than I. The mountain must come to Mahomet, for Mahomet will *not* go to the mountain."

The world wants lighthouse men! Be thou another Paul; or better yet, your own true *self*, redeemed, courageous, determined, consecrated. Be a blameless man and harmless, a son of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, and shine like a beautiful and cheering light.

The Very First Thing

*"From this moment
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
the firstlings of my hand. And even now,
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it
Thought and done.*

—Shakespeare.

"So great is the good I look for, that every hardship delights me."

—St. Francis.

"Here lies the body of Gen. Charles George Gordon who, everywhere and at all times, gave his strength to the weak, his substance to the poor, his sympathies to the suffering and his heart to God."

—Epitaph.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might : for there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest."

—Ecclesiastes.

"But seek ye first the Kingdom of God."
Matt. vi, 33.

It is the first day of a new year. A thousand million men, women and little children have run another lap in the great life-race. Hundreds of thousands have fallen by the way, overcome by sickness or old age. Hundreds of thousands, issuing through the mysterious gate into the great arena, have made their feeble start upon their little hands and knees. Some have gained crowns and scepters, some have been reduced to poverty or to beggary. The moans of the defeated mingle their minor chords with the glad songs of the victors; and the panting procession pauses for a few moments at one of the turns, to rest and to reflect.

Multitudes have gathered on this holy morn, in houses set apart for prayer; and to favored men has been given the opportunity—as to me—to speak to them words of warning or encouragement and hope.

It is a solemn privilege and responsibility. It was upon some similar occasion that a great preacher exclaimed, "I have a half-hour to

Hits and Misses

raise the dead;" and the deep awe with which Whitefield always looked upon an audience of dying men led his biographer to say of him that on such occasions "he thought of nothing but the immortality and the misery of man."

For myself, as I face this audience of men and women of education, of power, and of influence, I feel like a warrior who for a few moments has been permitted to smite with the sword of Scandenberg or David—an admiral who has a half-hour in which to touch all the springs and levers and lanyards on a battleship.

I must not waste this precious time, and I have chosen for your meditation words than which there are no more momentous in the spoken or written language of man—the words of Jesus Christ, an utterance pregnant with destiny, weighty with command, appealing with irresistible authority to every conscience. My exposition of them may be weak, but *they* are strong; and as the beauty of the rainbow is not diminished by the poverty of the poet's verse, nor the force of gravity by the scientist's feeble description, so *they* will survive the foolishness of *my* preaching.

"Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God."

There is a first love, a first purpose in every human heart. There is always a taproot. No matter how many *mouths* the fountain has, the

The Very First Thing

water enters through a single pipe. There is in your heart and mine an elemental, primary principle, passion, purpose, aspiration, which is what we really *are*. More and more we become what this *first* thing really is. No matter how many other interests we have or desires we cherish, this thing, which is the core of our being, is our real selves.

Some men are essentially idlers, shirks. They work, they toil, but it is because they *must*. Their one over-mastering passion is to evade toil, responsibility, care. They realize their heart's desire only when they crawl into their place of rest. They do not, like the lion, creep into their lair that they may rest to hunt again; but hunt in order that they may crawl into their lair and rest again.

Some men are epicures.

Last Christmas day such a man, under the influence of one of those fleeting, superficial fancies which seize us all at times, gave to a bootblack what he thought to be a dime, and wished him well. Upon arriving at his home he discovered that he had mistaken it for a five-dollar gold piece. Early the next morning he hurried to the barber-shop and found that the little boy had spent his gift for a suit of clothes. "It is not often a little fellow like me is so kindly treated, even on Christmas

Hits and Misses

day," he said, smiling gratefully at his patron. But the epicure, writhing with the conflicting passions of generosity and selfishness, yielded to his evil nature, and insisted that the proprietor of the shop should give him back four dollars, and make the little bootblack "work it out with his brush" at the rate of two dollars a week.

And yet that very man "thought nothing," said my informant, "of spending fifty cents for a piece of foreign cheese no bigger than three fingers."

Any one who is familiar with the book of James knows where *that* man's God is. *His* primal instinct is self-love. *His* taproot runs down into his larder. Stomach is king. Thank God there are other kinds of people in the world!

The first passion of some men is the relief of sorrow.

Down at the corner of Pearl and Third there is a cellar which is a sort of *cul-de-sac*—a dungeon with high walls and no staircase, accessible only by an elevator. A few days ago a little kitten, chased by a dog, came tearing down the pavement and plunged into it for a refuge. The employes in the store tried for five days to get it out before they succeeded, for it was terrified and hid in impenetrable

The Very First Thing

corners. The next day after it had been liberated a schoolboy entered the store and asked what had become of the kitten. When he was told that she had been emancipated from her captivity he said, "I am glad, and I am sorry." "What do *you* know about it?" asked the clerk. "I have been dividing my dinner with it for five days," he said simply, and passed out.

Let us put up a prayer to God that this *first* feeling of sympathy may never be *second* to any other in the heart of the little boy!

This feeling is not confined to the breasts of *boys*. An English sparrow had found an open place in a frozen gutter over on the top of a Mound street balcony one cold morning last week. He scarcely waited to dip in his little bill, throw back his little head, and slake the thirst in his little throat before he flew away and brought back five other little companions with him, more thirsty than himself. I have always loved these little wretches *on the sly*, and now I proclaim my admiration on the housetops!

Well, to go back, there is always a taproot, a core, a "first" thing in every heart; and Jesus Christ says that in every *true* heart it will be a love for the Kingdom of God.

According to my understanding of his thought the "Kingdom of God" possessed a

Hits and Misses

double meaning to the mind of the Master. Sometimes it was an *external* Kingdom in the visible world, of which all men should ultimately be the happy and virtuous citizens. But sometimes it was an *internal* empire in the heart of the man himself, and I cannot doubt that in this sublime command he bade us make the establishment of both these kingdoms the fundamental passion of our hearts and lives.

Let us consider the external kingdom first. I ask you whether down in the core of your hearts, its "coming" is your first and all-consuming passion. It was *Christ's*. Follow His footsteps in a swift flight of memory through His earthly ministry, and see if it was not so. At almost every turn you come upon the revelation of a burning conception, of a world from which sin had been banished, and in which dwelt a humanity bound together in the invincible bonds of love. His eyes roamed outward from the little land of Palestine to the nations which "wandered as sheep without a shepherd," and He yearned to gather them into a single fold. While other men were consumed by the desire to establish their private fortunes, His soul pondered the great world problems. Why are the nations at war? Why does not the broken family unite around the Father's hearthstone? "The field is the *world*," he

The Very First Thing

cried. "And I," he exclaimed, "if I be lifted up, will draw *all* men unto me." "Go ye into *all* the world," he commanded, "and preach the gospel unto every creature." As Alexander sighed for an empire of blood and iron that should extend over the whole habitable globe, Jesus labored and wept and prayed for one of peace and love. For this dream He gave His life. He was a martyr of the Kingdom of God. He existed and he perished, to unite humanity in a sublime brotherhood.

And every man who becomes his true disciple must be like him—the victim of an imperishable and consuming vision, the vision of a ransomed and regenerated race of men.

In proportion to the vividness of that dream and the intensity of that passion, men become the followers of Christ. And how can men *help* cherishing it? It would seem as if the thought of humanity remaining in its present condition of antagonism and strife and bitterness and hatred would crush a heart of stone and melt a heart of iron. Can *you* endure to think of these countless nations of earth-like colossal cats in an indestructible bag, clawing and biting and tearing each other to pieces for centuries and centuries to come, as they have done in the past, without an emotion of horror? If this is all there is to look forward to, if

Hits and Misses

Nature in her blind birth throes can bring forth from the womb of time nothing better than this, then I say for one that I am ready to see a mill stone fastened to the neck of the bag and the whole accursed litter sunk in the depths of the sea. I do not think I could *live*, unless I believed in the final coming of the Kingdom and the King. I *do* believe in it! I believe the *best* is *yet* to be. The golden age is not in the past, but the future. The lion and the lamb are to lie down together, and a little child shall lead them. A "new world" swims before my raptured vision. Whoever dreams of it and labors for it is my brother—whether Plato in his "Republic," Augustine in his "City of God," Moore in his "Eutopia," or Milton in his "Paradise Regained," or Bellamy in his "Looking Backward," or any wild-eyed victim of trades unionism or socialistic nightmares! Let this hope lie in the core of his being, let this passion for a world-wide empire of fellowship and love be *fundamental* with him, and my heart and hand will leap to him in sympathy. Who would not labor for it? Who would not die for it? It *must* come, or the world will be transformed into a madhouse. Humanity is arriving at self-consciousness, and its sensitive spirit cannot forever endure this horrible disappointment and these frightful contradictions.

The Very First Thing

This Kingdom is a spiritual necessity. Seek it *first*. Subordinate all else to its realization. *This* is the command of the Christ.

B. In the second place there is a Kingdom of God to be erected in our own souls, and its establishment also was a primal passion of the Christ, and ought to be of ours. To preserve the beautiful harmony of all his faculties, the sublime equilibrium of all his feelings, to keep everything in perfect order and the white dove of peace continually hovering in the sacred, quiet atmosphere of his soul, such was the passion of Jesus. For this he struggled in the wilderness, for this he shed those drops of bloody sweat in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Is this true of *you* this New Year's Day? It ought to be. So far as our personal selves are concerned, there is one paramount and primary duty. It is to be "perfect, even as our Father in Heaven is perfect." We must bring into a state of absolute harmony the discordant powers of our soul. It is not difficult to see that the soul is like a delicate machine in its capacity for working smoothly and beautifully, when all is well. It may become like a fine chronometer in which no sound is heard but the delicate click of the escapement while every toothed wheel plays quietly upon its own pivot and into the cogs of its neighbor, or like a great

Hits and Misses

Corliss engine, in which *without a jar* the mighty fly wheel revolves and the piston plunges, day after day and night after night, the incarnation of equilibrium and power. To bring the soul to this quiet and perfect poise and self-possession, to make the affections, the judgment and the will play into each other's hands with this noiseless precision, to make Conscience king over this now turbulent and anarchic realm is not only a *possibility*, but the primal *duty* of man. This has been the passion of other men beside the Christ. Listen for example to the mellifluous words of Milton: "As to other points, what God may have determined for me I know not; but this I know, that if he ever instilled an intense love of moral beauty into the breast of any man, he has instilled it into *mine*. Ceres, in the fable, pursued not her daughter with a greater keenness of inquiry, than I day and night the idea of perfection."

Such is the first duty of man.

Have you done it? asks the dying voice of the Old Year. *Will* you do it? says the New.

I speak to a company of people, who have been more than ordinarily successful in solving the so-called "problem of life." You have attained a high degree of culture and wealth. You represent much of the best results of our

The Very First Thing

modern life ; but I push the question of the two years home, and ask you to answer, whether this culture and prosperity have not served to blind you to a greater degree than you have thought, to these great primal duties.

It has always been a terrible law of life, that when communities acquired a high degree of wealth and culture they began to devote themselves to pleasure, and in doing so forgot perfection. In the rough and arduous hours of struggle with obstacles, we retain by a sort of stern necessity a certain hardy virtue. But when we have attained the prize, decay sets in. It was not the rigors of the Alps, but the languors of Capua that sapped the courage and virtue of Hannibal's army.

Upon the stupefied sense of every generation of successful men who have achieved wealth and devoted themselves to pleasure, the old Circean myth rises like an apparition. The hardy companions of Ulvsses, who had stood out against war and famine and flood, succumbed to the food, the drink, the music of the luxurious queen. She touched them with her wand, and sent them to feed with swine. Their high manhood was debased. Their ambitions were quenched. Their hardy spirits were enmeshed in the thralls of mere brutality. To eat and sleep, such was the fate of those

Hits and Misses

wretched devotees of pleasure. Such will be *ours*, if we have no higher aim than to eat, to drink, and to be merry. *To-morrow we will die*, or that which is *best* will die *in* us!

A few months ago a young lieutenant in the navy, whose whole life had been a long and arduous struggle with hardship, went down in the darkness of midnight with a handful of companions to perform a deed of daring which has set his name upon the same scroll as that of the Maccabees, the Gracchi, of Leonidas, and Bruce. While the waves rolled over him and the shot and shell hissed and burst above his head, he was a hero. But when he emerged from danger and obscurity to meet the bravos of men and the adoration of women, he fell. Like a doll baby, he suffered himself to be petted and kissed, until his honored name has become a bye-word and reproach, and a disgusted nation is ready to implore the United States government to keep her young lieutenants *under water*, to pickle them in ocean brine, until their blood has turned to ice and their hearts to marble.

Am I wrong in my suspicions that there are strong muscles that have been relaxed by luxury in this community? Are there no victims of pleasure here? This deadly atmosphere asphyxiates its victims so sweetly and gently

The Very First Thing

that they are unconscious often until it is too late. An environment like this is a dangerous if not a deadly one. We are moulded to it and take its style as chameleons take their color from the trees. Our hearts are like wax to this potent die of luxury.

Occasionally we find a soul superior to its power. He opposes an invincible front to its solicitations. While he is *in* this world of ease and softness he is not *of* it. He seems to dwell remote like a star. He is solitary in a crowd. It does not concern him what others do or think, he pursues his aim resistlessly onward and upward.

"Had I melted into my surroundings instead of reading and writing continually, life had not been so dismal, but I lived among the stars an abstemious ghost," said Joaquin Miller, writing of a memorable period of trial and bitterness.

"Melted into his surroundings!" Aye, there is the deadly method by which spiritual death comes to most of us. We melt into our surroundings, like tallow into a mould! What this world needs is more men who live among the stars—abstemious ghosts!

I am no ascetic! I do not plead for poverty and self-crucifixion as good in themselves. They are no more good in themselves than

Hits and Misses

wealth and luxury. And it would do no good to advocate them even if they were. Nothing is more certain than the acquisition of wealth. We are foreordained to luxury. Man, with his knowledge of nature and control over her resources, will sow this world chin deep in works of art and luxury before he is done. We must learn how to use and despise luxury at the same time, or we are doomed! What I plead for is the spiritual imbuelement which shall make men *superior* to their environment, and insensible to the deadly fumes of wealth and pleasure *while they breath them*.

There is a life, a power, an imbuelement like this. Let a man become consecrated to some noble endeavor, let there but come into his life a holy passion for perfection, let the Kingdom of God become his master, moving vision, and he is safe. At once he rises to the stars and dwells among them, and the earth worms, looking up from the deadly night shades and fumes midst which they crawl, see in him an "abstemious ghost!"

It is a race of such abstemious ghosts among the stars that these last years of the old century needs. If luxury and wealth are indeed to enervate men and take the soul and spirit out of them, I could be content, for one, to see the

The Very First Thing

temples and palaces, the works of art and vertu erased from the earth like the figures of a demonstrated proposition from the blank face of a black-board. I should prefer to see humanity begin again that arduous search and struggle and endeavor which has formed our heroes and saints, and as it were *created* the soul. If I thought that my life in this beautiful parish, surrounded by friends, relieved of care, and supplied with the coveted goods of life, were relaxing my aspirations and clouding my spiritual vision, I have still strength left to wish that I might be thrust back by violence to those old days of my youth, when I "endured hardness" for Christ's sake, when I lived in a hemlock shanty, bought my daily bread with the penny contributions in a "hat," and helped lath and shingle the church, for which I begged the money almost on my knees.

I wish you all a happy New Year. I wish you every good of life. But loving you passionately as I do, I pray that God may withhold from you these treacherous gifts for which you are struggling, or withdraw those which you have already attained, if they hang like a veil before your spiritual eyes, and like a mill stone around your spiritual neck.

If they obscure the vision of the Kingdom of

Hits and Misses

our God on earth, if they choke out the desire for spiritual perfection, they are a curse and not a blessing.

Seek first the Kingdom of God! First!
First! First!

The Discovery of God is the Clari-
fication of the God Consciousness

"The universe is an ever fresh and new creation, a divine improvisation from the heart of God proceeds."

"It seems as if I could sit all day with the thought of God overflowing me as the pebbles lie bathed in the willow brook."

"It is the glory of man that he is satisfied with no good below the highest—namely, God."

—Hugo St. Victor.

"May I say it? It is not hard to know God—provided one will not force oneself to define him."

—Joubert.

Before an experiment in electricity, Professor Henry said: "Now be silent! I am going to ask God a question!"

"Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."—St. Paul.

*"Canst thou by searching find out God?
Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfec-
tion"?—Job xi, 7.*

Because we are mortal we must answer the second of these interrogations with a sad and humble "No."

No, we cannot find out God to perfection. "It is as high as heaven, what can we do? Deeper than hell, what can we know?" When the dew drop extinguishes the fires of the sun, when the ephemera comprehends eternity, when the firefly illuminates the forest, then, and not till then, shall mortal man exhaust the knowledge of the infinite God.

But our answer to the first of these questions is a confident and unhesitating affirmation. We greet the sneer of the cynic and the wail of the skeptic, that "a finite being can know nothing of an infinite person," with the calm rejoinder, "a finite man knows *something* of an infinite *universe*, and why not of an infinite *Being*?" But more than this. Man *can* find out God, for he *has* found out God! The age-long search has really been successful!

Hits and Misses

This conviction is at least the faith of him who speaks to you to-day. And what greater service can we render to each other than to reveal our *faith*? Perhaps we cannot *demonstrate*; but we can *testify*. Each little bird may sing its matin song, each star may shed its ray of evening light, each flower disclose its hidden loveliness. And so each human heart may open to its fellows its own secret of happiness and hope. And this is the testimony of the heart of him who speaks to you. The search has been successful, the hidden God has been revealed.

The discovery of God consists in the clarification of the impression which his presence in the universe has made upon the finite mind of man.

There has been in the soul of humanity from the beginning of history at least, a "God concept." The origin and nature of that concept varying by the whole diameter between Polytheism and Atheism, has been the never ceasing source of wonder and speculation.

The inquiry into this mystery plunges us at once into the deepest problems of the soul! What is the origin of knowledge? How do any ideas at all awaken in the mind?

Some of them at least are vague and shadowy unrealities, caricatures and exaggerations of the objects in the external universe. They are

The Discovery of God

figments of the mind, and haunt us in our sleeping or our waking hours as *day dreams* and *nightmares*. There is nothing in the objective world to which they really correspond. They have been compounded in the laboratory of thought from broken visions of realities, but are themselves unreal. They come and go. They flit and reappear. Is the conception of God like them? Can any one believe that this idea which has haunted the minds of innumerable billions of men since the time when man's memory runneth not to the contrary, is the unsubstantial fabric of a dream, and not the reflection of some stupendous reality? Has it been any less tenacious than the concept of a material universe? And if this concept of a universe is the reflection of a reality, then why is not the concept of a God? What has sustained it in the mind, if reality has not? If it is but a dream, why do not *we* awaken? Why does *it* not vanish? Dreams are no more self-existent and indestructible, than soap bubbles. When a soap bubble lasts forever, when a dream abides, then and not till then will I believe the concept of a God to be a mere hallucination of the mind. Bubbles burst, dreams vanish, man awakes!

A permanent concept must be the reflection of an abiding reality—as a permanent shadow

Hits and Misses

must be cast by an abiding object. An indestructible idea must rest upon an indestructible foundation!

An ignorant old woman who had declared that the world retained its equilibrium by resting on a great rock, was driven to desperation by a skeptic, who persistently asked her what that *rock* rested on, and *that* one, and *that* one, and *that* one? Rising in anger at last, she affirmed with flashing eye and clenched fist—that it was “rock all the way down!” And this is what, for one, I must believe about the idea of God! It rests upon a foundation that is rock all the way down! It could not thus persist, unless it were perpetually excited by an imperishable reality. I cannot doubt, that just as we think there is an objective universe, because of an objective universe which shines and blows and burns and thunders and impinges upon us, so we think there is a God, because there is a being who smites our conscience, fills our eyes with tears, and touches our human heart with love.

And if it should be asked, “If this is so, why do we not all have the same idea of Him?” nothing is easier than to answer back, “Why do we not all have the same idea of this material universe?” No fact is more familiar than that our conceptions of this visible uni-

The Discovery of God

verse vary almost as much even in this scientific age as do those of "the invisible" God!

Does this universe, think you, seem the same to the Khamaskatcan, or the savage of the Congo, as it does to Herbert Spencer, or as it did to David or to Jesus Christ? Our conceptions of every object, even the most simple, differ as widely as our personalities, and none of them is correct until our critical faculties have been developed.

The glory of man lies in his capacity of criticism. Slowly and painfully he eliminates the fictitious elements from the original and unscientific conceptions, whether of the visible universe or the invisible God; and the difficulty always is, not that he does not see both, but that he does not see either accurately. He *does* see both. The world concept is no more universal than the God concept. It is only more *consciously* so. And if it be still asserted that there are some minds in which the consciousness of God is not found, it must not be forgotten that you can no more deny the existence of water because a few wells are dry, or of atmosphere because you now and then find a pump from which the air has been exhausted, than you can deny the universality of the God consciousness because now and then you find an atheist.

Hits and Misses

Yes, God impinges upon us, and therefore we are conscious of Him. We have an idea of God, only because there is a God to excite it. We could no more have an idea of God if there were no God, than of a universe if one did not exist. Even the hippogriffs and hobgoblins of our dreams are based upon realities. There could have been no hippogriff if there had not been a horse, an eagle, and a lion out of which to construct it. How then could there be an idea of God if (so to speak) there had not been some God "stuff" out of which to make it? Yes, we *think* there is a God, because there *is* a God. We have really discovered Him, and it remains for us only to clarify the conception which we now have.

The thought to which I summon you this morning is this: The search for God, or rather the clarification of the vague consciousness of his divine presence in the universe, is the grandest achievement of history.

The greatest glory of man must always be his ability to discover the unknown, and to comprehend the uncomprehended. If I were an artist and wished to represent the very essence of man's greatness, I would carve a human figure with two faces, one looking eagerly down into the earth and the other as eagerly up into the heavens, to discover the unknown.

The Discovery of God

The search after truth, the discovery of the unknown facts of the universe, and the clarification of the crude conceptions of the mind, have been the eternal passion of the greatest of the sons of men. And in these explorations, what courage, what devotion, what self-sacrifice have they shown! Will you have examples? Take the search for the open Polar Sea. With what reckless abandon have the Franklins, the Kanes, the Pearys, the Greelys, the Nansens and the Andrees flung their lives away or placed them as a willing offering on the altar.

Take the search for the other unknown regions of the earth. The names of countless heroes who lived before *history*, have been consigned to oblivion; but the courage, the daring, the self-immolation of the Hudsons, the Vasco de Gamas, the Ponce-de-Leons, the Cabots, and of the immortal Columbus have adorned the story of human life with a lustre which time can never dim.

Take the search for all the other hidden secrets of the world. Begin with astronomy and reflect upon the passion with which men have spent their lives in all the centuries, gazing and gazing and gazing into the infinities above them until they have plundered their inmost mysteries. Go on through geology, botany, chemis-

Hits and Misses

try, biology, psychology, and all the splendid galaxy of the sciences, and everywhere you see a countless multitude of irrepressible, indefatigable, invincible men, peeping and prying into every corner of the tangible, or audible, or visible world. Nothing is more clear than the determination of these men to ransack the very universe itself. They will turn the world upside down and inside out. Its secrets cannot hide forever from these prying eyes. The search is a desperate one. We *must*—we *will* know! To be frozen in icebergs, to be shipwrecked on oceans, to be lost among mountains, to be engulfed in volcanoes—all these are nothing, if only we may drag the secrets of the universe out into the light.

But you do not see the significance of all these sublime endeavors until you realize that consciously or unconsciously they have all been directed to a single end, and that end is the discovery of God, or the clarification of the imperfect concept of Him. For this is, after all, the master secret. If we can find Him, we have found all. Not every investigator has realized this fact, or consciously pursued this end. Nor, when a vessel is plowing its way across the sea, are all the members of its crew consciously seeking the harbor. It is only the captain and the mate perhaps who never lose

The Discovery of God

sight of that single aim. And yet the entire crew, from the stokers who feed the furnace and the engineers who hold the lever, to the cook in the kitchen and the middy on the yard arm, are working for it as ardently as they.

And, to my mind, the multitudinous efforts of all these individual explorers who are independently (many of them selfishly or aimlessly) hunting for these mysterious secrets, become *intelligible* and *sacred* only because they are bearing upon a single point, and can have but a single result—the discovery of God. Their scattered rays are being slowly focussed as in a mighty lens upon a single mystery—the nature of the divine Being.

Looked at from this point of view all becomes comprehensible, and the sublimity of the scattered and divided efforts is seen.

The figures of the great leaders in this search (attended by their innumerable companions) rise before our enraptured vision. Buddha meditating upon His being beneath the sacred trees in India, Abraham setting his face westward to find His person near the sinking sun, Moses wandering among the mountains and beholding His Majesty in burning bushes, David, Elija, Isaiah, pursuing the ever-present, ever-receding vision; Socrates and Plato, Cicero and Marcus Aurelius gazing into

Hits and Misses

the profound depths of the human spirit, and, at last, the humble Carpenter of Nazareth, his eye purged like that of the eagle, beholding Him with undimmed and unclouded vision in every lily that bloomed and every bird that sung and every little child that looked trustfully up into his face.

Sometimes it has fared hard with this sublime discovery—this ever-clarifying concept. There have been ages when it has been eclipsed and ages in which it was almost lost. Atheism has abolished it; dualism has divided it; pantheism has enveloped it in fogs; polytheism has trampled it under its swine-like feet, and agnosticism (last and deadliest of all its foes) has dismissed it with its calm, superior smile.

But still the idea abides. Still the vision endures. Still human hearts are true to it, and would even dare to die for it, while every year its imperfections are eliminated and humanity gains a truer knowledge of its God. Once, I have said, it existed in complete perfection in the soul of the divine man. His mind contained it, as the drop of dew contains the sun. It was a perfect reflection, in the pure depths of that beautiful, undistorted spirit.

And we may correct our own distorted vision by that of Christ's. His conception has become the standard of the world. The eye

The Discovery of God

which cannot gaze at the Sun itself without being blinded, gazes freely at its reflection in the drop of dew. We see our God in Christ.

Once more we listen to the old interrogation uttered in the minor tone of sadness, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" And listening here this holy Sabbath morn we catch the joyous answer rolling round the world: We *can!*—we *have!* God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. He is our Father. The age-long efforts of the myriads of men who have looked and listened have been successful. Man has formed a true concept (true as far as it goes) of the universe in which he lives, and true as far as it goes of the spirit who created it. Alleluja! Amen! We cannot find him out to perfection; but the vision which we have caught from Jesus Christ is *genuine*. It is correct in outline. It is incomplete, but it is not untrue.

There is a certain solemnity in this thought. It fills the mind with awe to think that starting in absolute ignorance (like that of a new-born infant) of this infinite universe, humanity by the aid of its prophets, its sages, and its divine Teacher, have risen to these august conceptions.

What a treasure is this gift which humanity lays at our feet this morning. Here, in this

Hits and Misses

"gospel" conception of a loving heavenly Father, is the result of the toil and sacrifice of billions of lives. Suppose that these results should be obliterated, and we had to begin again! Suppose that you had nothing of the fruits of all this search of anguished, eager hearts to help you on your painful way, and that we had to start *de novo* with that first vague consciousness which stirred in the bosom of those primitive savages who wakened slowly from animalism to humanity as they looked up from the earth beneath their feet to the stars above their heads.

And what is your spiritual attitude, my friend, toward this idea of God which has been thus distilled from the prayers, the sighs, the tears and raptures of the ages? Have you received it? Have you appropriated it? Does the beatific vision float before your inward eye? Or have you spurned the gift divine?

To me there is no defect in the soul more radical and more despicable than ingratitude and contempt for the efforts of those who have gone before us, to solve the problems and remove the obstacles of life. The fruits of these ages of labor and devotion possess to my mind an indescribable sacredness. We ought never to forget that all the treasures of the modern world are the products of the consolidated

The Discovery of God

efforts of the entire human race, the countless myriads of men and women who have struggled with the forces of nature and the foes of existence. He who rejects or despises these gifts seems to me to be guilty of a certain sacrilege.

But no one despises and rejects the fruits of these labors in the world of useful inventions. With what eagerness you appropriate the engines, instruments and mechanisms which these myriads of inventors have perfected for your use.

It is so in the world of art. The products of their struggles to conceive and materialize "the beautiful" possess a sacredness which every thoughtful mind respects. The paintings, the statues, the palaces, the cathedrals which have been slowly and painfully evolved out of all these age-long yearnings and strivings of the ceaseless generations of men, awaken within our bosoms both wonder and gratitude.

It is so in the domain of literature. The great books of the ages are the hives in which the honeyed thought of billions of men are stored! It takes whole beds of roses to make a single drop of attar, whole groves of cinchona leaves to make a vial of quinine, whole fields of clover to make a cup of honey, and whole generations of men to make a *Kalavalla*, *Niebelungenlied*, *Iliad*, *Paradise Lost*, *Inferno*. These

Hits and Misses

books—the sacred vials which contain these precious distillations—we preserve as we preserve the apples of our eyes.

It is so with the great ethical ideas, and the great social conceptions of the race. What multitudes on multitudes of suffering, struggling men gave up their lives to work out their problems. And liberty, for example, sacred in itself, becomes holier a thousand times because of the martyrs and heroes, the good, the great, the generous, the true, who gave their lives to demonstrate and secure for us this holy gift.

And now, it seems to me, the Christian conception of God, the conception as it exists, not in the minds of zealots and bigots, but in the minds and books of the greatest, noblest advocates, is the most sacred drop of knowledge that has been distilled from all the ages. Every race that has ever lived, every great thinker that has ever pondered on the secrets of life, has contributed something, perhaps, to the sublime conception of God.

For one, I could no more repudiate it than I could repudiate the government established by my fathers, or the conception of the universe elaborated by the sages. Nay, I could let all these and others go, before I could part with *it*. I cling to it. I adore it. I place it above all

The Discovery of God

price. It is the pearl for which I would barter every other treasure. Deprive me of this, and I have nothing; leave it with me, and I have all.

Let us cherish it in our heart of hearts. Perhaps in that sacred repository, where it has been purified by being brooded over, it will undergo still further clarification, and we shall be able to transmit to those who follow us amidst the mysteries of life a God-concept still more sublime and clear than we ourselves received from those who preceded us.

Hope, the Practical Equivalent of
Knowledge

*"The wish, that of the living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave—
Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?"*

*"Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams!
So careful of the type she seems
So careless of the single life;*

*"That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,*

*"I falter where I firmly trod
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,*

*"I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of All,
And faintly trust the larger hope."*

—In Memoriam—LIV.

Hope thou in God.—Ps. xlii, 11.

There are seven states of mind so closely juxtaposed that they may not inappropriately be called the *gamut* of the soul, or perhaps its "*scala sancta*," its holy staircase. They are: Knowledge, belief, faith, hope, doubt, disbelief, despair.

Beginning at the highest step of this sacred stairway, it is possible to descend into deepest hell. Beginning at the lowest, to ascend into highest heaven.

KNOWLEDGE is the clear and certain apprehension of truth; the restful assurance arising from proper evidence that a mental impression agrees with the reality of an object.

BELIEF is the acceptance of anything on grounds which, while they render it probable, do not *compel* its admission.

FAITH, in the sense now meant, is the assent of the mind to the testimony of God's chosen witnesses of truth, to the facts of the spiritual realm of being.

HOPE is desire accompanied by expectation,

Hits and Misses

the confidence that the thing looked forward to will happen.

DOUBT is the indecision of the mind between views which are, or seem to be, contradictory.

DISBELIEF is a positive and clear conviction that a statement does not correspond with a fact.

DESPAIR is the darkness and bitterness which overwhelms the mind when all hope and faith have disappeared.

You will observe that *hope* stands in the middle of this gamut, of this *scala sancta*. Below it are doubt, disbelief, despair; above it, faith, belief, knowledge. Hope is thus a sort of pivot of the soul's life. Upon hope as upon a wide platform in this stairway, I believe that any man, whatever his spiritual difficulties, may pause in his swift descent toward darkness and begin his upward climb toward light, and I ask you to consider the reasonableness of this assertion.

What is it that makes life hard and unsatisfactory to people of spiritual natures and noble aspirations? I answer, "uncertainty as to the being and nature of God." If such people could absolutely know that God lives and loves, or even if they could *believe* it, or even if they had *faith* in it, they could bear the disappointments and endure the trials of life with forti-

Hope, the Equivalent of Knowledge

tude. Absolute and verifiable knowledge of the being and nature of God would simply *revolutionize* life. If, to-morrow morning, a new faculty could be developed in the mind, or a new organ in the body, by which we should gain as clear a knowledge of God as we have of the sun, the metamorphosis of all institutions and characters would be catastrophic. Even if we could only have belief instead of knowledge, or faith instead of belief, the transformation would be stupendous and immeasurable.

But widespread as the belief in God has been, it has lacked that definiteness and assurance that could work these catastrophic changes, and in *our* day multitudes of people have ceased to possess any kind of assurance whatever as to his existence or character. Just as the frost has been pulled out of snow by a summer sun, just as fragrance has been extracted from fading flowers by decay, confidence, trust, assurances of God have been dissolved in the hearts of multitudes of our fellow men by the discoveries and the speculations of modern science and of modern criticism.

Now, what message has the Christian ministry for these people? They constitute an enormous and increasing class, and if we have no word of comfort or enlightenment for them,

Hits and Misses

we might almost as well cease to proclaim our call to preach a "universal" gospel.

For one, I believe I have a message for them. It is an old tradition that a bullet dipped in the blood of the hunter never misses its mark. Well, this message has been dipped in *mine*. I know such people's needs because I have suffered them. I feel toward them like the Ancient Mariner—

The moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me!

This is my message: If you cannot have *knowledge* of God, if you cannot secure *belief*, if you cannot exercise *faith*, you can accomplish the main end by *hope*! ANY man can *hope*. HOPE THOU in God! I say that ANY man can *hope* in God, and this proposition is so sweeping and so important that we must bend the whole force of our critical analysis upon it.

What *is* hope? Hope is that faculty or capacity of the soul by which it believes in the existence of what it thinks *ought* to be, and expects what it considers *desirable*. Hope is an original element in the mind of man. It is a basal quality of spirit. It is as much an *instinct* as the love of life. Hope is as much a mode of soul as heat is a mode of motion. It is a power without which existence would become unendurable, and so impossible. The

Hope, the Equivalent of Knowledge

value of this function of the soul in life transcends the possibility of exaggeration. Its mission is as much underestimated as its possibilities are unrealized.

I have said that *hope* was instinctive; and the significance of this fact must be brought to light. I mean that it is *natural* for man to hope. Hope springs out of the soul just as water springs out of a fountain, or light out of a candle, or perfume out of a flower. It is not the result of *experience*. It is not dependant upon proof or even probability. It possesses the power of spontaneous origination. It is self-animated. It is self-sustained. It can be developed, but it cannot be created. Little children do not have to be *taught* to hope, any more than they have to be taught to drink their mothers' milk or breathe the air of heaven. They hope because they cannot help hoping. Whatever they think desirable, they expect, and they do so by an original instinct and necessity of their being. Nothing on earth is more divinely beautiful than the bubbling of these hopes from the heart of an inexperienced, happy, care-free child—not even the gushing of water from a fountain, nor the opening of a rose from a bud, nor the rising of a star above the horizon. And if the origin of hope is divinely beautiful, its tenacious persistence

Hits and Misses

through life is divinely wonderful. Nothing is so astonishing as the indestructibility of hope. How can it survive the innumerable disappointments of life? How can it be explained that you, that I, we who have seen ten thousand hopes decay, should still continue to expect "the desirable"? That which we anticipate and strive for, *never* seems to come. It is always the unexpected which happens. And yet we *hope*! Hope is the last spark to die in the cooling embers of the soul. Only the suicide is *hopeless*! When that moment arrives in which the spirit says, "I have no further hope," we expect a tragedy, for life is insupportable when hope is gone. But while life lasts, hope burns in every normal breast—a self-sustained fire—and the mystery of the sun, apparently supplying its own fuel and creating its own energy, is no greater than that of an old man's soul generating the light of hope out of the black fuel of defeat and disappointment.

It is, in fact, this independence of hope for its existence upon proof or evidence, or experience, that constitutes its most mysterious beauty. Those great and invincible spirits in every age, who have dominated their generation, and who have triumphed over every obstacle, never asked for a foundation for their hopes in experience or in reason. Hope sprang

Hope, the Equivalent of Knowledge

from an inward source, and was poised upon its own self, like a sun in the heavens. They hoped, not because they could demonstrate, but could demonstrate because they hoped. The bare feeling within their souls that events were desirable, justified anticipation of their realization. They expected them, therefore they arrived. Things ought to be, and therefore they *must* be.

You may think this irrational; but it is fact, that what one might almost call *blind* hope, has led to a thousand times the triumphs of a calculated wisdom. And it is not unique in this. The mightiest potencies within us are unreasonable. Love is *blind*; faith is *blind*; hope is *blind*. But it is these sightless eyes alone that lead us safely to our journey's end! Experience may help a wild duck to find a berry under a leaf in a pond, but it is *instinct* that guides it from Hudson's Bay to the Gulf of Mexico. Experience, logic, argument, calculation, may help you through *to-day*; but nothing on earth can bear you over the pathless journey of three-score years and ten but *hope*. Experience, logic, argument, calculation, have their mission, but it is not the mission of hope. *Its* mission, believe me, is infinitely nobler. And you may discover that this is so from the fact that the grandest moments of your *own* life have been

Hits and Misses

those of the largest hope. Was it when your soul was cast down and disquieted within you that you knew yourself to be at your best? No, a thousand times! The sun of life reaches its zenith at the moment when it cherishes the most unquestioning expectation that its plans shall all be realized.

And it will not do for you to try to throw a cloud over the glory of this sublime capacity of the soul by pointing out its apparent untrustworthiness. You affirm that it has *deceived* you, misled you, made you chase the feet of ever-receding rainbows. Yes, but it has led you *on!* When you have hoped, you have gone *forward*; when you have despaired, *backward*. And to-day, now, you have courage to fight, just in proportion as you have *hope* in your heart. If I could to-day rekindle the fires of hope in the hearts of some of you I could add years to your life, give you "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Oh, cherish *hope!* You can never tell when the long road is going to have its turning. Remember upon how slight a circumstance (as upon a little pivot) the whole world has sometimes spun around. Perhaps the next tooth in the great wheel of time to slip into a notch, will set in operation a train of circumstances

Hope, the Equivalent of Knowledge

loaded with blessings for you. Never say die! Never give up the ship! While there is life, there is hope. Hope on! Hope ever! Hope against hope!

"I laugh, for hope is happiness with me,
If my bark sinks—'tis to a happier sea."

said William Ellery Channing. And to all great souls, the lesser hope *always sinks* into the larger.

Now, would it not be strange if this marvelous faculty of the soul which has such a mission in the realm of time and sense had none whatever in that spiritual realm of being which the generations of men have darkly dreamed of ever since humanity came to its consciousness? Believe me that it has, that it is the key to that closed door.

Suppose you have no *knowledge* of that realm! Suppose you do not even *believe* in it. Suppose you have lost your *faith* in it. Still you can cherish HOPE.

You have afflicted yourself with the thought that you cannot *prove* the existence of God and the immortality of the soul! Well, you do not need to *prove* things in order to hope in them. If you could *prove* them, you could *not* hope for them any more than you could *anticipate* the past, or look forward to the pleasure of eating a pudding which you de-

Hits and Misses

voured yesterday. "Hope that is *seen* is *not* hope! For what a man seeth, why doth he yet *hope* for? We hope for that we see *not*, and in PATIENCE WAIT for it."

I am still guilty of a thousand mental inconsistencies and absurdities, but I have at least been emancipated from that most colossal one of all, that leads men to think they cannot take any comfort in the thought of God until they have DEMONSTRATED his existence! We do not need to be certain that there is a God before we can be blessed and comforted. All we need is the privilege of hoping that there is a God, of feeling confident that that which we so earnestly desire is really true, and I now declare that nothing in the world but absolute *proof* that there *is no God* to hope *in*, could render hope irrational. And where in the name of heaven is *that* proof to be found? What atheist has ever discovered it? It is *impossible* to prove that there is no God. You cannot prove a universal negative. The impossibility of proving that there was no form of life more minute than the microscope has yet discovered, and no star beyond the last one which the telescope has revealed, is mere child's play compared with the effort to prove that there *is no* God. In order to prove that there is no God you would have to penetrate every corner of

Hope, the Equivalent of Knowledge

an infinite universe. But if it cannot be proven that there *is* no God, what prevents you from *hoping* that there *is*?

The moment that I clearly perceived that the non-existence of God could not be *demonstrated* my mind leaped out toward Him with a bound. "Let me see anything prevent me from hoping *now*!"

All my soul wanted was its opportunity. Hope ought never to demand anything more than the removal of the impossibility of its exercise. Nothing can be more irrational than for one who has the power of *hope*, to demand proof and demonstration. It is like a falcon that has *wings*, demanding that it should be carried upon a hunter's arm, like a package of merchandise. Wings were made to traverse space with, and hope was made to cross unbridged chasms with.

You are wrong, you are irrational in your craving for *demonstration* of the being of God, in your wailing demand for CERTAINTY. You are wrong, because you do not *need* certainties. You have been endowed with faculties which enable you to *dispense* with certainties. You do not (or at least the noblest and best of men do not) demand *certainties* in practical life, and could not have them if you *did*. The merchant

Hits and Misses

who loads his wares upon the deck of a vessel has no *certainty* that it will reach the distant wharf. The parents who sacrifice their very lives to educate their children have no *certainty* that they will repay those efforts. The heroes who consecrate their lives to some great cause have no *certainty* that it will reach a prosperous issue. They only ask that no demonstrable impossibility lies in their way, and then they put the shoulder of hope to the wheel. All Columbus asked was to know whether anybody could *demonstrate* that India did *not* lie to westward. He only asked that he might have the *privilege* of hope, and then pointed the prow of his vessel out upon an unknown sea.

Such is the sublime mission and power of hope, and if there were no unknown and uncertain elements in life, hope would be as useless to the soul as the vermiform appendage or any other "vestigial remain" have become to the body.

And I say unhesitatingly that a man who asks for a demonstration of the being of God has gone too far. He does not need certainties. Let him but exercise the power of hope, and he will attain the same ends he seeks through knowledge. It is possible (and has been shown to be, ten thousand billion times,) that men could live as if they saw God when

Hope, the Equivalent of Knowledge

they did *not*, as if they could prove his existence when they could not—just *by the exercise of hope*, and because this is possible it is asking too much to ask for more. The author of this psalm did not. He stood squarely upon this principle which I have enunciated. He said to his soul, “You feel the need of God, then *hope* in God; no one can say you nay. I cannot offer you demonstration, certainty; but you can, hope!”

And now, if this be true, we are ready for another thought. It does not follow that because hope is independent of *certainty* that it may not be greatly strengthened and supported by *probability*. It can! Whenever God Almighty wishes a fire to burn, He furnishes it with fuel, and He who has furnished fuel for every other fire has filled the universe with the kindling wood of hope!

The evidences of the existence of God may not amount, even when taken in all their marvelous fullness, to a demonstration; but their accumulated evidence excites and inflames hope to the burning point.

Let a man for once and all rid himself of the demand for absolute demonstration in the evidence for the being of God, and the fullness of that evidence to excite a presumption, and cre-

Hits and Misses

ate a probability that he exists, assumes its full proportions.

If you want to believe in God, if you are determined to hope there is a God, cast your mind over that array of *intimations* of his being which the generations of seekers after God have marshaled upon the field of thought.

It sustains and inflames hope to remember that in almost all ages and in almost all circumstances the minds of all classes and conditions of men have been feeling after God if happily they might find him. It affects me to see men thus reaching up and groping after something, as I think it would to see all plants and trees reaching up and groping after something, even if I had never seen the sun. There must be something drawing them, inviting them, exciting them, uplifting them, or they would not always be looking up and reaching out and hungering for that something!

It sustains and inflames hope to observe the order, the beauty, the harmony, and the apparent adaptation of means to end in every nook and cranny of this universe into which our eye can penetrate. The mechanics of this sidereal system are indeed celestial. Our minds may be disturbed and upset in their reflections for a little while by new and startling theories of science, but sooner or later, as we gaze upon

Hope, the Equivalent of Knowledge

this august and awful piece of mechanism, we can no more help thinking that a mind produced it than when gazing at a Corliss engine.

It sustains and inflames hope to behold the stupenduous panorama of life unfolding itself according to fixed and immutable principles, and climbing up from lowest forms to highest, from animal to human, from material to spiritual. We are confounded over and over again by the catastrophies which befall this upward striving of the current of life, by the disasters, the struggles, the cruelties, the groanings that cannot be uttered nor comprehended; but sooner or later there steals upon us a solemn consciousness that over it all there broods an eternal and an infinite spirit.

It sustains and inflames hope to see how this idea of God has been clarified as the ages pass, in the souls of the seers, the prophets, and the sages. Sooner or later we are compelled to see existence through the eyes of the world's "great men." It is an irreversible law of our being, that the vague emotions of millions of common men crystallize finally into the clear consciousness of the uncommon man. The sage pronounces the word which trembles inarticulately upon the lips of the masses. Reject it as we will, their testimony prevails at

Hits and Misses

last. And, to-day, we listen to them once again while they speak to us with sublime authority. Out of the life of Abraham, of Moses, of David, of Elijah, of Isaiah, issues the sublime assurance that their souls have attained a clear and satisfying vision. And like a seraph chanting from some solemn peak of heaven, high above earth's jarring and discordant sounds, the voice of the Divine Man comes floating down the ages, "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth!"

Brethren, it is no wonder that when the soul of man, asserting its divine prerogative of *hope*, sets before itself the conception of an infinite and eternal spirit of love and power and wisdom, and excites itself by such kindlings as these, that it bursts into a flame of rapture like that of Paul when he exclaimed, "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord!" Nor like that of John, when he heard, as it were, the voices of a great multitude, as if it were the voice of many waters and of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reign-

Hope, the Equivalent of Knowledge

eth"—for these evidences so sustain and glorify *hope* that it becomes transfigured into faith, and faith is transfigured into belief, and belief is transfigured into the full equivalent of knowledge. It is this state of mind which is called, in the Scriptures, "the full assurance of hope." It is *not* knowledge; but to all practical purposes, it is the *same* as knowledge. Men come to live, to act, to die, as if they KNEW! Like Moses, they endure as IF they saw the invisible. And what more do you need or can you rightly ask than a confidence that will really support you in all your earthly trials? If you have a genuine trust in something which is the full equivalent of knowledge, if it leads you to *believe* even though doubt is *theoretically* possible, if it leads you to act as if the issues of conduct were certain, although they have not been revealed in advance, is it not enough?

If you can come to have so deep and abiding and unquenchable hope in God that you can bear suffering in the full assurance that chastisement is the measure of love; if you can resist temptation in the full assurance that heaven will bring your spirit ten thousand compensation for all the fleeting joys you here deny your flesh; if you can look upon the dead bodies of your loved ones in full assurance that you shall meet their spirits in the other world;

Hits and Misses

if you can regard your own sins in the full assurance that God has pardoned them in the love of Christ—can *certainly* make you any happier or safer?

There are multitudes of people who arrive at this full assurance of faith. I do not say that it is not knowledge, when it reaches this point. I think it is. I believe (and you have heard me say so too often to doubt it) that the soul has a direct and intuitive knowledge of God. But it is not what is known as *verifiable* knowledge in the present stage of thought. But whether it be knowledge or not, it is its practical equivalent. Hope is the practical equivalent of knowledge, and what we need is the full exposition of this fact. We have been led to think that Christian faith somehow or other became transmuted into knowledge—which is impossible. Faith is not knowledge; it is, at best, hope. But hope is the practical equivalent of knowledge.

We have reached the conclusion of our meditation, but I must add a few words of encouragement and inspiration.

Hope is capable of cultivation and enlargement. Hope is an original capacity of the soul, and probably no more easily destroyed than memory, imagination or reason. We neglect its culture. We permit it to decline. It is

Hope, the Equivalent of Knowledge

so much easier to doubt than to hope, as it is so much easier to loaf than to labor, to dream than to think, to forget than to remember. But to-day I say to you with all the confidence with which a father says to his son, "you can be good if you will"—"you can hope if you will." "Hope thou in God." If you ask me *how* you can hope when hope seems dead, I cannot tell. But neither can I tell you *how* you can reason, nor how you can imagine, nor how you can remember! These mental processes are all mysteries and too deep for analysis, and yet it is right that I should say to you, "Think!" "Imagine!" "Remember!" And so I say to you, "hope"!

But if I cannot tell you *how* to hope, I can give you a picture of how hope becomes stronger and stronger by its exercise.

I have often been told (altho' I do not know that it is true) that when the first bridge was thrown across the river below Niagara Falls, an Indian took his stand upon the bank, placed an arrow on his bow and shot it over to the Canadian side. To the arrow a silken thread was fastened, to the silken thread a wire, and to the wire a cable. Strong hands across the river seized the silken thread and gently drew the wire across and then the mighty cable! Upon the cable's invincible strength the bridge

Hits and Misses

was hung, and over the bridge thousands and thousands of pilgrims have crossed in all these passing years.

And so the first thought shot across the chasm to the shores of the other world may carry but a tiny thread of hope; but loving hands will seize it and draw up strand after strand and cable after cable, until upon the bridge thus formed an endless procession of aspirations, wishes, prayers, shall safely pass across.

This is the figure of an impoverished and imperfect human fancy. But in the epistle to the Hebrews you may find a symbol given you by God. "Hope is an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered—even *Jesus!*"

Righteousness is Rightness

"It is no more possible that what would be evil in man would be good in God, than that a circle on earth would be a square in heaven."

—Martineau.

"Right action always follows right purpose."

—McKinley at Omaha.

"I never questioned nor disobeyed an order in my military life."

—W. T. Sherman.

"As soon as we lay ourselves entirely at His feet, we have enough light given us to guide our steps; as the foot soldier, who hears nothing of the councils that determine the course of the great battle he is in, hears plainly enough the word of command which he must obey."

—George Eliot.

"Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness and speaketh truth in his heart."

—Psalm.

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.—Acts x. 34, 35.

In this passage we strike bedrock for the erection of all moral and religious systems. And what is *more*, we *know* we strike it. Coming upon it after groping through strata after strata of loose and shifting material, is like hearing the click of the pickax on granite, after digging down through sand and gravel. You do not have to drive in any spiles as they do in the ooze under Venice, or lay down tier upon tier of railroad irons, as they do in the sand under Chicago; but find eternal rock, as they do on Manhattan Island. "Of a truth, God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." This, I say, is bedrock. It is the most fundamental, universal, comprehensive principle of ethics ever formulated by man. On it you can build and rest. Every system of morals and religion will have sooner or

Hits and Misses

later to be squared to that principle. God loves and accepts righteousness, right living, right being, right thinking. No matter when or where he sees it, he always accepts it. Rightness or righteousness (the terms to me are synonymous) is current coin of the realm, and passes in every province of the Universal Kingdom of moralities.

Let me speak to you to-day of rightness, of righteousness which God loves and accepts, always and everywhere. What I have to say has been prompted by an observation of Herbert Spencer, in animadverting upon Christian ethics, "Rightness expresses of actions what straightness does of lines, and there can no more be two kinds of right action than there can be two kinds of straight lines." There is a sense in which that is beautifully true. It rings in my soul like a silver bell. But there is also a sense in which it is *not* true, for it does not cover *all* the ground; for as a matter of fact there are not only *two* kinds of straight lines, but many hundreds. For example, there is a straight line drawn with chalk upon a blackboard by a schoolboy, who takes such pains to make it straight because he does not know how to recite his lesson straight, but *does* know how to draw a line straight!

Then there is a straight line running along

Righteousness is Rightness

the pediment of the Parthenon, with the beautiful carvings above it and the beautiful pillars below it. Then there is the straight line of the horizon to be seen far off upon the rim of the ocean, foam-crested, far-stretching, majestic. Then there is a straight line made by a sunbeam, clear from the eye of the bright God of day to the surface of the earth. The first is a straight line, and nothing else. But in the second, and third, and fourth, the straight line is raised, if I may so say, to a higher power of both beauty and extension. It is the same, and yet *not* the same.

And so I say it is with *righteousness*. At its base and in its core, rightness is always the same; but after all, this rudimentary thing may become exquisitely developed, and raised to a higher power of beauty and extension. One rightness may exceed another in loveliness, as the sunlight straight line, and the horizon straight line, and the Parthenon straight line exceed the blackboard straight line. Permit me to exhibit rightness to you in ascending stages of beauty and glory.

In the first place, then, men do right deeds and think right thoughts, *unconsciously*. One day a little bootblack sat on his box eating a loaf of bread. There came creeping up to him a barefooted child, a little girl, whose eyes,

Hits and Misses

burning in their sockets, and whose teeth, gleaming like fangs through her pale thin lips, betokened that she was starving. The boy surveyed her for a moment, then broke his loaf in the middle and threw her half. He was young, he was ignorant, he was untutored. He did this deed as unconscious of its nature as an animal. He did it, in fact, in exactly the same way that a Newfoundland dog plunges into the water for a drowning man. He obeyed a primal instinct; but neither knew that it was an instinct, nor that it was primal. It probably did not cost him an effort of his will. It originated in his emotional and not in his volitional nature. He gave this bread, as the cannibal mother or a wolf mother give their breasts to their young. But in doing so, he performed an act of righteousness or rightness, all the same. It was one of those deeds that springs out of the eternal fitness of things, and is a spark struck out from the central fires of goodness. It was another proof that "as birds are made to fly and rivers to run, so was the soul to follow duty." It was a real deed of rightness, as much as a little meteor is a real planet, or a little minnow is a real fish, or a little sprig is a real tree. It was not the highest and most beautiful example of rightness; but it *was* rightness, although he never dreamed that he, a little

Righteousness is Rightness

street Arab, was performing in this perfect simplicity an equivalent of that deed which the Christ told the arrogant, metaphysical, self-conscious Jews that they must do if they ever expected to enter the Kingdom of God, viz., to give a cup of cold water to a little child. This deed of his was the rudimentary straight line of Mr. Herbert Spencer. In a certain sense the little Arab's was as straight a line as the Apostle John ever made. As far as it went it was rightness through and through. He did not *know* that he did so, but in reality he was doing just the same sort of a thing which Jesus Christ did upon the cross. He acted under the impulse of obedience and subordination to another not himself, to a law higher than his own wish, to some far off undiscoverable, unthought of Being who sent him here to do that very thing. And the deed was beautiful, even though it *was* imperfect or rather *incomplete*. There is not a human heart sound to the center which does not *perceive* that beauty. There is not an angel in heaven who would not shed a tear at the sight of it. And what is *more*, the good God accepted it, if we can believe our text and the testimony of our souls, as appreciatively as he ever accepted a deed from the hand of saint or martyr. It had its origin, this right deed, in the very center of the boy's soul. It

Hits and Misses

sprang out of the rudimentary religious instinct of the child's nature. It was truly moral and therefore truly religious, for all true morality is at the very least *unconscious* religion.

Let that stand, then, for one kind of rightness, such rudimentary and imperfect rightness as one finds among the ignorant and the undeveloped and the savage—the best they have, but not the best there is—accepted when it is the best they have, impossible to be rejected, impossible to be declared *unrighteousness*, as the chalk line to be declared *unstraightness*. There may be, there certainly is, much evil along with it, enough perhaps to overshadow it, enough to grow up and crush it and leave the right-hearted little gamin a miserable, degraded and devilish man. But still the deed was a right one.

In the second place men do rightnesses *consciously* sometimes, under the dominion of motives and faiths higher than those of the gamin and the savage, but not *the* highest. Having attained the capacity of self-knowledge and begun to analyze their deeds and motives, they obey the right because it is the right, and for no other cause at all. In this obedience they are unlike the gamin, in being conscious of *self*; but like him in not being conscious of God. Never has there been a case in the history of

Righteousness is Rightness

the world more striking perhaps than that of Matthew Arnold. Few men have ever lived whose capacity for self-knowledge was more profound, or who conformed more strictly to those eternal principles of righteousness which he intuitively perceived. He loved them with passion, and he obeyed them (so far as we can tell) with unfaltering devotion. And yet to him those ethical laws were only the changeless principles in the nature of *things*, the formal principles of a material universe. He did not believe in God, as we conceive Him. He would not believe in what he derisively called a "magnified and non-natural man." He thought of God only as "the stream of tendency by which all things fulfill the law of their being." He thought that the God consciousness of Jesus could be expressed in these words, "God is an influence." All that he felt sure of was "that there is a power which makes for righteousness," and that it was man's duty to yield to that power.

And this, he did. And in doing this he believed that he entered into the religious life. He departed from evil and "walked in awful observance of an enduring clew within and without us which leads to happiness." In this he experienced, so he thought, the ecstasy of religious feeling. "Righteousness," he af-

Hits and Misses

firmed, "is but a heightened conduct, and holiness is but a heightened righteousness—a more finished, entire and awe-filled righteousness." To him religion was ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling, morality touched by emotion.

Now, just so far as he *did* right and *thought* right, he *was* right. Up to that extent he was a righteous man. His rightness was of the same character in its essence as that of the little street Arab; but it was raised to a higher power, and it went *farther*. For this also is a difference in straight lines and right lines—some go farther than the others. One straight line, for example, only goes across a short blackboard, another goes across a facade of a building, a third from one island to another on an ocean horizon, and a fourth from earth to sun. Arnold's rightness, then, is not only more beautiful, that is to say, raised to a higher power, but goes farther than the street Arab's, just in proportion to his knowledge of its true nature and his effort to realize it. If this was all he could honestly see, and believe, and do, and be in the realm of rightness, then he was as righteous as *he* could be. What he did and was, possessed those eternal elements of beauty which are inherent even in a partial, rudimentary, *imperfect* form of rightness. All *men*

Righteousness is Rightness

must admire it. The angels must recognize it. God will accept it. It is current coin. It is right, and therefore righteous. To deny this would be to confound moral distinctions. It would be to call right wrong, and bitter, sweet; to put darkness for light and light for darkness. No *honest* man could do *this*. His very soul would protest. He cannot in his heart refuse to recognize the essential element of rightness in the moral lives of men like Arnold and Emerson, and in those of the great agnostics like Spencer, Huxley, and Darwin. In fact there is a sort of beauty in this rightness that awakens a peculiar feeling of admiration in the mind. Its realization under such difficult circumstances, and from such inadequate motives, lends a tragic grandeur to it. It is like a man's living a pure and happy life in a County poor-house, with no wife and children to inspire him, and nothing to live for, and nothing to labor for, and nothing to hope for. It is all *I* can do, for one, to live my life even with all the hopes and incentives of Christianity. And when I see such men living beautifully without those *incentives* and *hopes*, I am, as it were, struck dumb with admiration. But that is not the point. The point is, are such lives *truly* and *wholly* moral and religious? Has rightness or righteousness attained its *perfect*

Hits and Misses

beauty? Has it gone as far and been carried up to as high a power as possible? I claim that it has not. It is at best a limited and partial rightness, because it is not animated by the highest motives and conceptions. Even though the outward form and expression of such lives *may* be very beautiful, that beauty may be very imperfect and of an inferior order. It may exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees enormously, and yet fall far short of the ideal. Who knows how much *spiritual pride* may be in it? Who shall say whether it may not be clouded by a stubborn human obstinacy? It would be strange indeed if it were wholly devoid of these elements which fasten themselves so tenaciously on *all* human conduct, like rust on iron!

But give them the utmost credit. Allow that so far as they *have* gone, they *are* right. Admit that they *are*, whether these men knew it or not, truly religious as far as they are truly moral. And even *then*, they have not attained their highest power nor gone as far as they may.

For in the third place there is a *higher* form of rightness or righteousness, and that which is inferior can never be the equal of the superior. This form is the consummation of all the lower forms. It is the efflorescence of that

Righteousness is Rightness

rudimentary germ in the street Arab which has been carried up through numerous gradations and transfigurations in Arnold, and Emerson, and Huxley, and Spencer, and Darwin to its blossom and its fruit in John and Jesus. It is a righteousness or rightness having its origin in love and loyalty to a Heavenly Father who is himself the eternal source of all righteousness. The rightness of the Arab is the beauty of the life of the plant in the *bulb*. That of the philosopher is that life in the *stalk*, but that of Jesus is that life in the *bloom*.

Perhaps the *demonstration* of this assertion is impossible. At any rate, we have our faiths and our intuitions. And this is *mine*.

All conduct becomes more beautiful in proportion as it is inspired by loyalty to intelligence and hearts rather than to forces and laws!

And so there is a sublimity in rightness higher than even the tragic grandeur of those who do right because they feel a force and law, a power not themselves which makes for righteousness. And it is that sublimity which grows out of duty done in humble devotion to a Heavenly Father whose will and wisdom we trust with absolute devotion. I say that perhaps I cannot prove this; but I can at least give my *reasons*. And they are such as these:

a. The conduct of a little orphan child that

Hits and Misses

bends humbly, patiently, blindly to a set of rules posted on the door of an asylum, issuing from sources the nature of which he knows nothing and which stand for his limited intelligence as mere abstractions, but terribly real and true, *may* have a beauty of its own, and really *has* this beauty, a beauty tragic and pathetic. But when the child has been transplanted from an asylum to a *home*, and knows that those same principles of conduct are not only enunciated by the lips of his new found parents, but are incarnated in their beautiful and tender *lives*, he now obeys them through a passionate devotion, admiration and love for those beings who brood over him, and pray over him, and fold him to their hearts, and kiss him with a tenderness which melts him to tears. Then, to *me* at least, his obedience and his rightness have undergone a transfiguration, have been crowned with a new glory, and have reached their final efflorescence.

b. And so the strict and dogged obedience of a soldier to every regulation of the camp and every order of the manual may have a certain element of beauty and a certain modicum of rightness; but when at last there comes a general in whose scarred face, whose commanding person, whose princely manners, whose royal soul, all those regulations and orders have be-

Righteousness is Rightness

come incarnated, and the soldier becomes inflamed, lit up, and lifted out of himself in a passion of personal loyalty to this great leader, to *me*, at least he has carried duty and righteousness up immeasurably higher than before.

Whether I am right or not, it *seems* to be a law of our human life that the moment the principles and laws of being *are* incarnated in some great leader, some sublime personality, we leap to them in him, as drooping plants rise at the fall of the rain. Dull, stupid, lethargic, lifeless obedience is suddenly kindled into passionate and sublime enthusiasms. In the last number of one of our great journals, a profound thinker began an article with this simple aphorism: "A young man naturally, and a middle-aged man of necessity, chooses giants for guides." And what is this assertion but the disclosure of the fact that we need to recognize all virtue, and power, and law as originating in, or at least emanating *from, personality*.

Now and then there may be a great philosopher who is capable of rendering obedience to "a power not ourselves" (and not a magnified and non-natural man), which makes for righteousness. But the masses of men have never yet been able to do it; or, if they *have* done it, to do it heartily, and joyously, in the genuine beauty of holiness and righteousness.

Hits and Misses

But whenever and wherever a genuine faith in a personal God whom we may justly call our Father has been awakened, conduct has undergone a marvelous transformation. Mere cold and formal obedience has been transfigured into the glorious and passionate devotion of saints and martyrs.

And, to my mind, this is the essential characteristic of the beauty, of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. I cannot think of him as rendering obedience to an impersonal power that makes for righteousness. He came to do the will of a Heavenly Father. The laws which he obeyed appear to have seemed to him the personal volitions of this divine Parent. He no more conceived of them as the impersonal principles of a material cosmos than as the ordinances of a set of blind-eyed Scribes and Pharisees. Whenever he heard the call of duty, it seemed to him the voice of a Father's love; whenever he saw a pathway of toil and labor opened, he saw a *presence* walking before him; when the cross was laid upon his shoulders he felt the kindly touch of the hand which placed it there. And this was what made his life radiant with confidence. This was what transfigured his conduct. Other men have done the same deeds that he did, but not in the same way. And, to me, that which differentiates

Righteousness is Rightness

Him from them all, and His deeds from theirs, is this very clear apprehension of that Father whom the philosophers ridicule as a magnified and non-natural man.

It is easy to ridicule this idea, for it is so sacred. In fact, the more sublime and sacred a thing is, the easier it is to be ridiculed. Nothing is easier to ridicule than a boy's love and reverence for his mother, or a man's love and reverence for his God. And sometimes we must confess that men make their own faith absurd. We belittle our faith by dragging God down to the level of the little trivialities of our lives and making it seem to others as if the Being we adored had nothing else to do but tie our shoes or find our lost pins.

A Welshman who visited London while extensive sewage improvements were going on is said to have lost his watch. He reported the matter to Scotland Yard, and the officials assured him that they would *leave no stone unturned* to find the missing timekeeper. On returning to his wanderings about the great metropolis, Taffy saw not only stones upturned, but street after street torn up by the laborers who were laying sewer pipes, and was told there were thirty-six miles of road in the same condition. This quick and unstinted interest in his personal affairs astonished him, and,

Hits and Misses

rushing back to the office, he exclaimed to the wondering inspector, "I didn't think I was giving you all that trouble. If you don't find the watch by Sunday, I wouldn't tear up any more streets." There may be religious people as credulous as the Welshman and who think that God has nothing else to do but tear up the universe to find their watches.

But this absurd egotism is not that simple, intelligent and reverent recognition of a Heavenly Father of which we speak, of which Jesus gave us our supreme illustration, and which Tennyson felt when he uttered those memorable words, "Take away belief in the self-conscious personality of God, and you take the backbone out of the universe!" In it, there has never been any absurdity, and its results have always been sublime. That faith in his wisdom and his love has sustained the saints and heroes in their highest endeavors, and lifted their moralities up into the realm of holiness. It was this strong confidence that made the life of Theophilus Wilson, whose body lies on College Hill awaiting his burial, an idyl, a hymn, a psalm, an epic. He, too, like Moses, lived as if he saw the invisible. In him also morality was lifted up, grade after grade, into holiness. The bulb shot up into the stalk, and the stalk broke into the blossom. The rudimentary

Righteousness is Rightness

righteousness of the savage was transfigured into that of the philosopher, and the philosopher's glorified into that of the saint.

And so as there are trees *and* trees, lines *and* lines, stars *and* stars, there are righteousnesses *and* righteousnesses. And although Peter found in the rough and earnest Roman soldier a certain rightness which God could not reject, yet *who* does not believe that in the after years of his life, it suffered a sea change into something new and strange and became as much more beautiful than a Roman soldier's rightness, as a sunbeam straight line is than a school boy's chalk line.

Rightness or righteousness is capable then of apotheosis after apotheosis. Conduct and life may become more and more right and beautiful, acceptable with God and man. It is a wonderful thought, that we may here prepare a character and a method of life that, as I said at first, are current coin in every corner of God's universe, and that will admit a man to any society.

Under the influence of this sublime trust and love for the Heavenly Father, David Livingstone acquired a sort of rightness that made him equally at home in a palace or a hovel. It was not only a passport to Windsor and to Westminster, but a safe conduct among sav-

Hits and Misses

ages and cannibals. He was everywhere and always a right man, a righteous man, and was as much at home in heaven the first day he entered as among the huts of the dark skinned savages on the banks of the Congo.

Lives like those of Cornelius and Livingstone are right lives, and God cannot reject them. But even *these* are not perfect lives, my friend. That which is right in them is right, and God recognizes it. But in all of them, how much there is of wrong!

Dear David Livingstone—apostle, martyr, saint—he felt the need of sheltering himself beneath a righteousness greater than his own. It was the hope of that humbled heart that when he stood before the great All Father, He would impute to him the “righteousness” of Christ. And this was the hope of Theophilus Wilson, and of that long list of saints who have criticized their own imperfect rightness in the light of the Savior’s perfectness.

It is this “second” kind of righteousness which Mr. Spencer animadverts upon, perhaps.

“There are two kinds of Christian righteousness: the one without us, which we have by imputation; the other in us, which consisteth of faith, hope, charity, and other virtues,” said the great and good Hooker. For one, I share this feeling of the need of having a goodness im-

Righteousness is Rightness

puted to me which is greater than my own. Who does not feel that we must daily and hourly be treated by all men as if we *were*, what we are *not*? Is not this true of every relationship of life which is based on love? Do you, sir, or do you, madam, think that your wife or your husband loves you only for your own goodness? Then I must disabuse you of that agreeable but mistaken solace. Over the varied and offensive imperfections of your life they throw the mantle of their own love. They love you not only for what you are, but in *spite* of what you are. "With all you *faults*, they love you still!" It is the holy nature of love, thus to cover up the faults of others under the robe of its own right mindedness. And it is this tenderness of the divine heart of God as revealed in Christ to which the humbled and the penitent in all ages have made their appeal. They have done their best, and they have done beautifully and rightly often. But how much they have left undone! How incomplete and imperfect have those lives and characters been in spite of all. And so they have cast themselves upon that divine compassion which treats them as if they were what they are not, as every lover treats the object of that love.

If this conception of Christian ethics is an error, if it is to sail under false colors to claim

Hits and Misses

a rightness not one's own, then the whole method of earthly love is also wrong. But its method is *not* wrong. We may trust and we may claim from all our loved ones, the imputation of a goodness not our own. And this we trust and plead with God.

We may not abuse it. We may not exonerate ourselves from the passionate effort to raise our own rightness up to its highest power of beauty; but when we have attained our utmost limit we must plead and trust a divine tenderness and compassion for our imperfections.

The Sacred Leaven of Sorrow

"The mind profits by the wreck of every passion, and we may measure our road to wisdom by the sorrows we have undergone."

—Bulwer-Lytton.

"Whatever below God is the object of our love, will at some time or other be the matter of our sorrow."

—Cecil.

"Ah! if you knew what peace there is in an accepted sorrow."

—Mme. Guyon.

"I cannot but think that he who finds a certain proportion of pain and evil inseparably woven up in the life of the very worms, will bear his own share with more courage and submission."

—Huxley.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.—II. Cor. iv, 17, 18.

Let us at the very outset clearly perceive and firmly grasp the idea in the mind of the apostle.

It is, that we misjudge our earthly life because we look only upon its surface, while if we took the trouble to gaze down into its depths, we should perceive *that*, the existence of which explains the elements which confound our understanding. For example—Sorrow!

Something lies back of its visible manifestation and down below its surface, which is working silently, slowly, and imperceptibly; but with an accuracy and a certainty like the mechanism of the sidereal system, to accomplish results whose ultimate manifestation will explain and justify the whole bewildering operation.

The affliction *itself* works! Not *you*; but the affliction! There is something in pain and suf-

Hits and Misses

fering that is like yeast, and which works, and works, and works!

To some of us *all* the time, and to *most* of us *some* of the time, life seems a hotch-potch, a pot-pourri of most miscellaneous events. Each day is like a bucket of a chain pump coming up out of a great grab-bag of disconnected and meaningless experiences, and emptying them helter-skelter into our existence. Some are good and some are bad, and each one is to be judged by itself, apart from all the rest. Sorrows and joys, successes and reverses, hopes and disappointments are all jumbled together, and we regard the collocated events of a month or a year much as we would a mass of household materials thrown out upon the sidewalk from the window of a burning building.

How few people in any community, how few in any age, really and truly believe in the hidden law that binds them into a beautiful unity! How few cherish a profound and sincere conviction that there is in this mass of apparently uncorrelated events an invisible element that is working like yeast in dough, like force in a crystal, like life in a plant, organizing and marshaling all into something homogeneous, beautiful and satisfying to the soul!

How is it with you? Do you believe that all there is of life is lying in plain sight upon the

The Sacred Leaven of Sorrow

surface, or do you believe that there is an invisible something working in its great deeps?

Let us examine this matter.

a. In the first place, in every realm of life there are one or more *invisible* elements, and it is these alone which are of any permanent significance. I have already instanced the dough, the crystal, and the plant. What is it that you really see in them? Nothing but the particles of matter which the unseen forces are shifting from one place to another, as the invisible electricity moves the visible wheels. And it is not the dough nor the diamond nor the plant that is of permanent importance, but the forces which inhere within them; for as long as they find matter to work with, they will make other dough and diamonds and plants.

Now let your minds dwell for a moment upon those multitudinous forces which are thus working silently and invisibly in the plastic material of the visible world. You see the clouds go drifting across the sky, but you do not see the shepherd wind which drives them onward like a flock of sheep. You see the floods of sunlight, but not the waves of the ether. You see the needle move around the dial of the compass, but not the magnetic current which propels it. You see the multitudinous forms which clothe themselves in matter, but not the whirling

Hits and Misses

atoms which are the very essence of that matter. You see the rivers gliding to the sea and the planets moving through the sky, but not the awful force of gravity which ever draws them to the ocean or guides them on their journeys through the infinite depths of space. You see the myriad living things which swim in seas, and flit in sunny atmospheres, and creep through forests or burrow in the bowels of the earth; but not the life which animates those living things. And look at man! Here is a soldier leading a forlorn hope, an inventor perfecting a new machine, an orator swaying an audience as a storm sways the tops of the trees in a forest. You see their hands move, their lips quiver, their cheeks blanch, their eyes flash; but these are not the men *themselves*. There is something hidden in them, producing these outward manifestations which no one *ever* saw, an imponderable essence eluding the keenest vision, and mocking the most searching investigation. It is the psychos, the animus, the mind, the soul, the spirit! It flashes on you in a smile, it startles you with a frown, it saddens you with a tear, and in these emanations you almost think you have beheld the thing itself. But just as you seem about to seize it, you know that it has gone, and yet you know that if you had the

The Sacred Leaven of Sorrow

organ for its perception, it would stand before you the one abiding and imperishable reality among all these evanescent forms.

And what must we conclude from this? Is the audible, visible, tangible world the real one; or that other world, of which these perceptible forms are but the transient manifestations? Is all of life upon the surface, or is the most of it hidden in its unfathomable depths? Are we not driven to say that nothing which we see is of any consequence at all, save as a manifestation of those holy things we do *not* see?

b. In the second place, in every realm of life or being these invisible forces are producing not only visible; but also invisible *results*.

I mean by this, that at any given moment in which you examine their operations, that which you see being done is only a small and inferior part of that which they are really accomplishing. They are all at work upon webs, the patterns of which are so delicate that we can never tell when they are finished, and they play into each other in such a way that we clearly see that there is no real end to any one of them. So true is this, that no process of nature which is absolutely new to us could give us any real clew to its final outcome, and experience alone can guide us to any conception of the results of these mysterious operations.

Hits and Misses

Suppose, for example, that you had never known anything at all about the incubation of an egg. You enter a barn, and somewhere in a quiet corner of the hay mow, you find an old brown leghorn hen sitting quietly and solemnly in her nest. You watch her for an hour or so, and perhaps come back another day, and then the next. In all this time you have not seen her move a muscle, draw a breath nor wink an eye. Astounded at the spectacle, you draw a little nearer, thinking she may be dead, and stretch out your hand to discover. In another instant you have satisfied your curiosity. Every feather is as full of life as a young serpent, and a piece of your forefinger is in her bony bill! And if your courage and your curiosity have survived this onslaught, you may put your hand beneath her body. What can it mean? Here are a dozen eggs which are slowly being addled by a heat that seems to issue from a furnace.

What is it all about? You cannot tell. All that lies upon the surface resembles idiocy or lunacy. But there is something *beneath* the surface. An operation is taking place than which there is nothing more beautiful or wonderful in the whole realm of nature. Results of the most invisible and surprising character are being slowly but surely attained, of which

The Sacred Leaven of Sorrow

what you see could not afford the slightest clew. A tiny bill is picking through each shell. A little life is budding there. And soon the proud and happy mother leads her downy brood out into the wide, wide world.

Suppose that you were a man of some forgotten era, issuing from a cave after an age-long sleep, and should stumble into the engine room of a great manufactory. You behold the fiery furnaces, the whirling fly-wheel, the plunging piston, the sooty firemen, the grimy engineer, and see that all is motion, all is measureless power. But what is it for? Nothing comes of it. Nothing is getting done. It does not give the slightest hint of any purpose and any other end.

But let me lead you through the upper rooms. Here, in these beautiful webs of silk (woven from the cocoon of worms as ignorant as you of what they themselves were doing), rich with lustrous loveliness and iridescent sheen, you see an end attained which inexperience could never guess. Who would dream that in a rotting acorn was being built a living oak, or that in the entrails of a nasty grub there was the eidolon of a beautiful butterfly.

What could you imagine could be the result of a battle if you did not know? Stand with me on this promontory overlooking the bay of

Hits and Misses

Santiago. A Sabbath stillness broods upon the world. A dozen ships are floating on the waters, like the clouds upon the sky, and songs and prayers are wafted from their decks. Hush! it is the very peace of God!

Quietly, stealthily another flock of vessels like themselves comes creeping through the harbor's mouth. Hark! the silence of death is on the world. A sudden shiver runs through the sleeping fleet. The ships awake! With leaps and plunges and swoopings, like lions, tigers, eagles, they fall upon their foes. Garnered lightnings flash from their sides. Thunders peal and echo and reverberate. Crash follows crash. They reel and stagger like drunken men. Conflagrations burst forth from the holds of the Spanish ships, and their decks are red with blood. The groans of dying men are heard.

What does it mean? If all there is of war lies here upon the surface, then war *is* hell!

But there is something there you do not see. It is working, working, working, and in a few short days will have achieved the liberation of millions of men from degradation. The clashings of these leviathans will change the geography of the world. That which you have seen is a phantom, a phantasmagoria. The reality, you did not see at all. And so with the whole

The Sacred Leaven of Sorrow

war, of which this was only a battle. Stupendous changes have been wrought; but no one knew what was going on under the stagnant surface of our national life six months before it was churned into this foam. And yet the wheels were revolving then; the mighty yeast was working, the eggs were being hatched; though all was out of sight, until the sublime denouement, the marvelous disclosure. The people did not see it. The Senators did not see it. The President did not see it.

And *still* the wheels are going round. What web is being wrought in those subterranean chambers now, think you? You cannot tell. The great depths are too deep. But the end is not yet. Fabrics of a still more wondrous beauty are being wrought upon those hidden looms. God's weavers are very still. They do not even whisper at their toil. They keep their secrets well.

And here we pause to get our bearings, and turn the light which we have found, upon the individual problems of our earthly lives.

Two things are clear. There is an invisible element. That invisible element is producing undiscoverable results. And this is true of sorrow, the Apostle says.

We must deal with sorrow, you and I; for the most of us have reached a point where dis-

Hits and Misses

appointment and loss confront us at every turn. The days of boundless hopes and glorious confidence have passed. We have missed too many joys to feel at ease about the future. We have ceased to count our chickens before they are hatched. The game has too often escaped the hunter, to encourage him to boast until he has it in his bag.

On one of my many country walks I saw a couple of little boys come rushing around the corner of a farm house. One of them had a flobert gun, and they were evidently in pursuit of an English sparrow. He lighted on a twig at last, an innocent and shining mark. The eager Nimrod laid his gun across a fence, shut his left eye, took long, deliberate aim—and fired!

“Did you hit him?” said I, although I had seen the sparrow flit into the foliage as easy and care-free as if the bullet had been a ladybug.

“I didn’t KILL him; but I FEATHERED him!” said my little Nimrod, shaking his proud head back and forth in sublime assurance.

When you were a little boy, did you ever TOTALLY miss a bird? I never did. I ALWAYS saw the feathers fly. But now, someway, I have to have my birds in my bag before I think I have hit them. I have missed so many shots that I have lost my imagination.

The Sacred Leaven of Sorrow

Yes, there are more misses than hits. Our game-bag is not very full. Our hearts are pretty empty at times. Our hopes have not all materialized. Disappointment has dogged us. We have *suffered*; yes, we have *suffered*! We do not need a dictionary to know what pain and sorrow are.

But do we know what they are in their *nature*? Do we know what lies under their agitated surfaces down in the great deeps?

My friends, there is a divine yeast of blessing in them. And it is working, working, working.

So far, we are on scientific ground. We can easily believe that this invisible element is to be found in sorrow. But *what* is it working, *good* or *ill*? *There's* the rub. Do we not enter a realm of hopeless conjecture *here*?

I do not believe it. Nothing in the history of human life has ever received a stronger, more unanimous, or more overwhelming testimony than this—that to him who misuses and abuses sorrow, it proves a deadly curse, while to him who accepts it in humility and love, a blessing and a glory. We stand on scientific ground here if anywhere. The facts that good food, and sleep, and exercise produce health, that industry and economy procure wealth, that kindness and self-forgetfulness awaken

Hits and Misses

love, are no better vouched for by human testimony than that there is an invisible *something* in sorrow that engenders blessing to him who accepts it in faith and humility.

What is *your* mental attitude toward your own sorrows? Are you bearing them with fortitude and accepting them with faith? This is what God's saints have always done. They *saw* no more than *you* see. The potent yeast was just as indiscernible to them, but they *believed*. They could not be persuaded that sorrow in its nature was *evil*. Nothing could shake their faith that all things were working together for good to them that loved God? They did not try to diminish their sorrows by forgetfulness; but they ennobled and glorified them with confidence and hope. They suffered as much as we; they saw no more than we, but they *trusted* more than we.

Let us cast ourselves upon their testimony. Let us hear the words of Christ with faith. Come unto *Me* all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest! He bore his *own* sorrows in this way, and he knows how to teach *us* to bear ours.

Is it not plain, then, that what we need is faith in the invisible? What will become of us if we fret and worry all the time about what the wheels are doing out of sight? The house-

The Sacred Leaven of Sorrow

wife does not worry about the yeast, nor the farmer about the seed. The old brown leghorn hen is not worrying about the silent and invisible operations of incubation as she sits dozing over her eggs. The little children are not worrying about the invisible processes by which their Christmas presents are being prepared, as they lie sweetly slumbering in their cribs. You have told them this time, as you tell them always (and thank God you can never persuade them) that times are hard, and they must not expect many presents. They just go off to school or climb into their little cots at night with a sublime, unclouded faith in the invisible. They *know* that it is working for them. All day long down there in the dusty mill or crowded store their invisible father is earning the money to buy their dolls and sleds. Late into the night, by the light of the flickering lamp, their mother sits stitching and stitching, and the old grandmother is knitting and knitting, and sister is dressing the dolly, and brother is making a cradle, and the fingers of uncles and cousins and aunts are working and working while their dear hearts are sleeping and sleeping and dreaming and dreaming!

We need such trust as *this*. What sorrow wants to do her perfect work in, is quiet, restful hearts. If we could lie in our nests like the

Hits and Misses

eggs and let the Divine Spirit brood upon us, a sweeter life would dawn within us. Let us lie more quietly in the hands of God. Let us think less of the visible and more of the invisible. Let us not care so much for what is going on upon the surface as what is being wrought down in the great deeps.

And so shall we see that these light afflictions which are but for a moment will work out for us, even here, the most strange and surprising results. We shall find that they give us a new patience, gentleness, humility, and repose. They will bring us a new consideration for others, a diviner charity, a tenderer sympathy. They will ripen us as sun and sap ripen the fruit on the tree or bring the plant to bloom.

And what they will do here—is but a faint hint, a feeble adumbration, of what they will accomplish for us in the long hereafter. They will work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, when we have come up out of our great tribulations.

He *Can* Believe, Who *Will* Believe

"What we ardently wish we soon believe."

—Young.

*"Begin by regarding everything from a moral point
of view and you will end by believing in God."*

—Thomas Arnold.

—*"One in whom persuasion and belief
Had ripened into faith, and faith became
A passionate intuition."*

—Wordsworth.

*"If Jesus Christ is a man
And only a man, I say
That of all mankind I cleave to Him,
And to Him will cleave alway.*

*"If Jesus Christ is a God
And the only God, I swear
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air."*

*Jesus said unto him: If thou canst believe—
all things are possible to him that believeth.
And straightway the father of the child cried
out and said with tears—Lord, I believe, help
thou mine unbelief.—Mark ix, 23-24.*

“I would give all that I possess to recover my lost faith,” said the man, and heaved a profound sigh.

I shall imagine that this man, and all who ever uttered this complaint and heaved this sigh, are seated before me, and shall try to point out the fatal misconception of the capacities of the human mind, which (according to my own experience and observation) lurks traitorously in that wail of helplessness.

You have lost your belief in the great doctrines of the Christian religion, and you think you have no power to recover it. That is to say, you do not believe that a man is a free moral agent in the realm of religious faith. You think that there is some insuperable obstacle which prevents you from believing in the immortality of the soul, in divine Providence, in answer to prayer, in the incarnation,

Hits and Misses

etc., and that even if you should *determine* to believe, and try your very *hardest* to believe, you *could not*.

Well, I meet you on your own ground and tell you frankly that I do not think you understand the operations of the mind. I have the courage to say this because for twenty years or more on account of a natural tendency to skepticism in the very fibers of my being, I have had the delicate mechanism of my soul under my eye, as a jeweler, with his glass gripped under his beetling brow, has a broken watch, in the light of some sunny southern window. I have watched those delicate wheels go round and round, until I have formed a certain psychology for my own self and out of my own reflection. It may be right or it may be wrong; but it is the best I have; it is my own, and it has served me in many a rough place on the journey, and such as I have, give I thee.

"If thou canst believe," said Jesus to the man. "I *can*, I *will—help thou me*"—he answered as if he saw and felt that in the domain of religious faith as nowhere else—the mind moved with strange, inviolable freedom. This is what I believe. I believe that while there are realms in which the mind moves according to an inviolable *necessity* in accept-

He *Can* Believe, Who *Will* Believe

ing or rejecting conceptions presented to it—in the realm of religious ideas—it moves in an inviolable *freedom*, and that any honest man who sincerely *wants* to believe in the Christian religion can be shown that he is *free* to do so.

Let us examine some of these mysterious operations of our minds.

A. In the first place in the realm of the material elements which lie about us, and constitute the immediate environment of our lives, we have no freedom at all (or only the most narrow margin) as to what we must believe about its existence and relation to us.

Matter is *real*. It impinges upon us. It is something *not* ourselves. Fire burns, frost bites, lightnings flash, thunders peal, birds sing, flowers bestow a perfume. Night falls. Day dawns. Sickness makes flesh quiver. Death stalks in, touches the brow, and all is over!

Doubt these facts if you can! Offer a man a million dollars if he will doubt a single item, and laugh at him while he wriggles and twists with the most violent but futile efforts of his will! The intellect is as helpless as a fish frozen in a block of ice! Now and then a crack-brained philosopher, shut up in a closet with a few books and a tallow candle, persuades himself that he believes there is no such thing as a world of matter outside his own soul. At

Hits and Misses

intervals recurring with suspicious regularity, a sect springs up which denies the reality of pain and persuades itself, that all suffering is in the imagination. But a goat butts the philosopher or a cramp seizes the Christian Scientist and crash! The world rolls in upon the soul with its indubitable and irresistible evidence of *itself*. Doubt it we cannot. Believe it we must. It is no matter of choice, but of inviolable necessity.

B. In the second place the mind sometimes works under the same inviolable necessity in the realm of ideas—of abstract thought—as for example, in regard to axiomatic or intuitional truths. A man is no more free to *disbelieve* that two bodies *cannot* occupy the same place at the same time, than he is to have his head both *in* his hat and *out* of it, when he takes it off to a lady! It would be a very amusing thing to watch the antics of a soul which was trying to believe that things which were equal to the *same* thing were *not* equal to each other.

Nor is the inviolable necessity by which the mind is *forced* to accept certain ideas confined to the realm of the *intuitions* alone. It takes a long time for a boy to grasp that remorseless system of logical inferences by which it is proven that a square constructed upon the hypotenuse of a right angled triangle, is equal

He *Can* Believe, Who *Will* Believe

to the sum of the squares on the other two sides. But as each step of the process is slowly disclosed to him, he is *compelled* to take it! His mind may hold back and struggle, but it has to go! A conscript was never forced into the army, nor a thief dragged to jail, nor a man swept over Niagara by any more resistless power than this little tow-headed, tear-stained Euclid is pulled and hauled to the conclusion of those resistless processes of thought. He has about as much freedom to go his own way as an owl in the talons of a flying eagle, or a lamb in the jaws of a hungry lioness hurrying home to her cubs.

A mind without such necessities and certainties, would be about as useful as a watch whose wheels moved at their own sweet will. It is this fixed necessity in its operation that makes the mind an instrument capable of the discovery of truth.

C. In the third place—the mind operates by these same kinds of necessities in still another realm, although the margin of freedom begins to widen here, and the line outside of which it is exercised, is by no means so easily discerned. I refer to the realm of scientific and historical knowledge, etc. The laws which govern the acquisition of knowledge in these realms are very obscure or at least difficult of comprehen-

Hits and Misses

sion by the unlearned. The science of logic is to most men as unfamiliar and repulsive as Sanscrit, but those who know it well, behold the human intellect moving under laws and principles as fixed as those of the planets. The soul in the grip of a syllogism is no less helpless than the kid in the grip of an anaconda. Everywhere, and in all circumstances, all men, whether they know it or not, are being passed along from the hands of major and minor premises to conclusions, with as resistless certainty as grains of wheat are being passed through upper and nether millstones into flour bags. There are vast tracts and regions of facts and laws and principles of life where truths are not yet discovered and arranged, in which there is room enough for difference of opinion, and for the freest and most independent choice of widely contrasted alternatives. The evidences for and against "expansion," or socialism, or Darwinianism, and ten thousand other things, are either not clearly understood, or are not equally accessible to all men—and there remains for them the widest possible latitude for choice or for uncertainty. But there come times in the evolution of ideas when this freedom no longer exists. Let a man try to disbelieve the laws of Kepler, or the Copernican theory of the Sidereal universe, or the

He *Can* Believe, Who *Will* Believe

reality of the French Revolution or the actual existence of such men as Charlemagne or Cæsar or Alexander the Great! What power does the mind possess to do so? It can no more doubt these facts than it can disbelieve what it *does* believe.

Nor has it any more power to restore a faith which it has once *lost* in this realm! Science has made it as *impossible* to believe in witches and fairies as it has made it *necessary* to believe in *electricity* and *bacteria*! Now, let a man attempt to regain his faith in the gods of Rome, or Fawns and Satyrs of Ancient Greece. He cannot! The will has no power in this domain. He may want to. It may seem to him that such a life of constant intercourse with the spirits that haunted the woods and fountains of ancient Hellas, would be the sweetest and most desirable in the world. But *he* cannot live it! He cannot by any, even the most protracted or violent effort of his free choice, compel his disbelieving mind to cherish those impossible faiths.

Now, this will serve to indicate to you that when I say that a man can believe in the Christian religion if he wishes to, I do not ignore the essential laws of thought, and, if it could be shown that the doctrines of Christianity belonged to any or all of the same classes of ideas

Hits and Misses

as those which have now been passed in review, I should be compelled to admit, that if some scientific evidence had affected them as it has affected the myths of ancient Greece, and you had thus lost your faith—it would be irrational and foolish to tell you that you could believe them again if you wanted to.

But I wish to point out to you that these essential doctrines of Christianity relate to facts and questions lying in a domain so different that the mind is compelled to deal with them by a different set of faculties altogether.

It is plain then, that there are realms of thought where the mind has no freedom to choose its beliefs, but has them forced upon it irresistibly. And it is equally plain that it is only in the realms where absolute knowledge is *impossible*, that any true freedom as to belief exists. What we *know* we *must* believe. Concerning that about which we only conjecture, we may believe what we *choose*.

Have you ever seen an ant caught upon a leaf which has floated out into a lake? And have you watched it dart from one side to another, reaching the edge and looking out upon that boundless expanse of void and illimitable waters? So the soul darts back and forth across the little island of the known

He *Can* Believe, Who *Will* Believe

facts of life and looks over into the profound abysses of the infinite and unknown.

What lies upon its island it has no choice about believing. But concerning what lies over the edge, it dreams and hopes and exercises faith! In *that* realm it exercises choice. Every man in reality *does* believe, that which he *prefers* to believe—about the unknown elements of life.

I say then that *the objects* upon which you declare you cannot now fix your faith, lie in a domain which science has never yet touched! They have thus far remained incapable of either absolute proof or disproof. They have so lurked in the sacred shadows that the most which we have ever succeeded in doing so far as any scientific and experimental knowledge is concerned, is to point out an almost equally balanced group of evidences *for* and *against* them.

What I now affirm then, is this—a man standing between these opposing and contradictory masses of evidence, is *free* (*inviolably free*) to choose the side which his heart, his hope, his aspiration prompt him to!

To set this fact before you in a light as clear as that of day, will be my effort now.

1. The first great fundamental object in which I affirm that you may re-establish your

Hits and Misses

lost faith if you wish to, is the existence of your soul. I affirm that its existence is not to be proven or disproven in the same way as any of these other objects of knowledge or at least not with the same sort of demonstrative and irresistible evidence.

You cannot touch, taste or handle your soul. If you know it by intuition (as I believe you do) you cannot test your intuition by experiment as you can prove that two bodies cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

Nor can you demonstrate its existence or its non-existence by logical syllogisms, nor by acids in a laboratory!

The proofs and disproofs are all drawn from a realm of either abstract reasoning or unverifiable intuitions, and in all ages of the world have been arrayed against each other in masses so nearly equal that the minds of men have oscillated between them like a pendulum.

One thing at least is certain, and nothing is *more* certain! It is that the existence and immortality of the soul has never been *disproven*! By what evidence *could* it be? Show us your disproof, if you can! *Demonstrate*. You may persuade one man, a few men, many men! But I ask for *demonstration*! By the nature of the case, demonstration is impossible. Science so far, has never transcended the domain of the

He *Can* Believe, Who *Will* Believe

material, and by the supposition, spirit is immaterial! You will as soon prove that there is no such thing as gas, because gas is not a *solid*, as that there is no such thing as soul, because soul is not *matter*!

We have disproven witches and fairies, because men said they were objects of *ocular vision*. But who says the soul *is*? We say it is *not*! And so it belongs to a different realm.

I ask you therefore whether you cannot believe in it if you *want* to? What *hinders* you? Not *proof*. Not demonstration! You are therefore *free* to *choose* between these two opposing views. And if you ever *do* decide, it must be because you *do* choose. *Forced* you cannot be. I can be *forced* to disbelieve in fairies, but I would like to see you force *me* to disbelieve in *my* soul! You may mass all your serried ranks of skeptics behind all libraries and laboratories on the two hemispheres and I will not budge an inch, because you cannot furnish proof! And so because I *want* to believe I *will* believe!

2. The second great fundamental object in which I say that you can believe if you want to, is a personal God a loving Heavenly Father? What, I ask you, has made it impossible for you to believe in *Him* if you wish to? Who has disproven his existence? I do not ask you who

Hits and Misses

asserted his non-existence. I know who that was. He lived many centuries ago, has never died, is living yet, his name is Fool! And every man who says there is no God, is, by the very necessity of the case, a Fool! for he asserts a universal negative! How does he know there is no God? He may have traversed the milky way on foot or have taken the wings of the morning and flown to the uttermost parts of space, and when his wings have melted in some last central sun, and head and heart failed him, he may have just then touched the outer hem of His garment! Prove that there is no God! You have no proof. I can believe in Him if I want to. I do. I will.

3. In the third place, I instance Providence and prayer. If you *want* to believe in them why do you *not*? Who has proven that there is no Providence and that prayer does not avail? I may not prove there *is* and that it *does*. But my inability to prove the affirmative is not your ability to prove the negative! If I want to believe that there is an ear that hears my prayer and a hand that guides my wandering feet, you can no more prove to me that they do not, than you can prove that a mother does not receive a telepathic message from a dying boy, or that when she has died, she does not hover round her child!

He *Can* Believe, Who *Will* Believe

4. In the fourth place, there is no *impossibility* of your believing in the incarnation of God in Christ. And here we must take care! We must divide this subject to conquer it. The problem of belief in Jesus Christ as a man and a God must be clearly differentiated. There is no more doubt in any one's mind who has any capacity to judge, that Jesus Christ lived the holy life and died the sacred death which he is said to have lived and died than that the sun rises and sets. We believe it by an inviolable necessity. We could not withhold our credence from this fact if we should try. The stones would cry out against us!

But you enter another domain when you ask whether his nature was that of a God! Here we pass beyond the possibility of demonstrative evidence at a single bound! Prophecy can make it credible, and it has, but cannot demonstrate it. Miracles may render it probable, and they do, but cannot prove it. The belief of his friends may lend it the highest likelihood. His own wonderful self-consciousness may lift that likelihood many degrees toward moral certainty; but still, still, we are moving in a domain where scientific evidence cannot touch the heart of the mystery. If a skeptic asserts that prophecies might have been coincidences, miracles might have been the result of human

Hits and Misses

knowledge raised to a higher power—friends might be deceived and even the clear self-consciousness of Jesus a delusion—*where will you go for disproof?* If all these evidences rolled together do not *demonstrate* (and they never have), then *demonstration* appears to be impossible.

The evidence for and against the divinity of Jesus masses itself up on each side of the soul like great cliffs full of magnetic power, and the soul drawn by one and then the other vibrates and fluctuates between them.

There, in those terrible oscillations of uncertainty, as I fled from one to the other of those piles of argument which had been accumulated during the ages, the conviction came clear enough to me, that *neither* would irresistibly draw me to itself, and that I must deliberately choose between them! I could see as clear as daylight, that whichever one I chose, I could find arguments enough to sustain me! But that if I waited to be irresistibly impelled to one or other, I should wait until death stole up and closed my eyes—and so, I chose! And nothing in the nature of the evidence against the claims of Jesus made it *impossible* for me to choose! It has never been *disproven* that Jesus was the Son of God! How *can* it be? It might be rendered very improbable; but how

He *Can* Believe, Who *Will* Believe

could it be made *certain*? What kind of evidence would do it? Every human being in the world might come to a unanimous and undivided decision that he was only a man—and yet be wrong. The whole world stood out against Galileo and yet the astronomer was right!

My friend, it is not *here* that the obstacle to your faith is to be found! You say that you cannot believe if you try. Well, at least, the impossibility does not lie in the *evidence*. But if it does not lie in the evidence—then you are free to believe it if you *will*! And that is what I said at the outset! I said there was nothing to prevent your recovering your faith if you really want to. And is it not right here that you are under a strong delusion and a lie? When you do not succeed in “believing,” you think that science has put forth evidences that make faith impossible, while in reality the difficulty is not in the credibility of the doctrines, but in some inertia and indifference in the *mind* which examines them!

This is a vastly different thing.

Let me illustrate these different relationships of the soul moving without volition toward irresistible evidence, and oscillating freely between opposingly attractive ideas.

Two steel castles stand on opposite sides of an artificial lake. A little iron vessel floats

Hits and Misses

between them, and suddenly turns and swims toward the castle which is charged with an irresistible magnetic force.

This is the mind of man swayed beyond its own control by demonstrable truth.

But the soul moving freely and independently between the realms of atheism, skepticism, materialism, and those of God and Christ and immortality and Providence, free to attach itself to whichever it prefers, is the hummingbird moving upon unfettered wings between a honeysuckle and a deadly upas tree!

If the arguments for Christianity were so irresistible that the soul would be forced to accept one side or the other by the same sort of necessity that it is forced to believe that twice two are four—there would be no test or probation of the soul.

The question is an *open* one, and we are told to *choose*. And what I affirm is, that men are not kept from accepting Christianity because it is intrinsically improbable, but because their souls are filled with so much weakness and worldliness, that when they come to try to attach themselves to these sublime faiths, they have not the grip to hold on! Of course you would believe if you could not *help* it. The point is, to believe when you *can* help it.

The difficulty then is not in the weakness of

He *Can* Believe, Who *Will* Believe

the evidence, but the weakness of the soul itself. There is proof enough to satisfy the soul that chooses to accept it. It is upon *this* point that I insist. We have lost soul power to cling to the true, the beautiful, and the good, and we say that the true, the beautiful, and the good have lost power to hold *us*! It is a delusion as old and as subtle as life itself. We lose our relish for food, and accuse *it* of losing its taste. We lose our sensitiveness to sound, and to color, and accuse *them* of losing their charm. We become cynical and sour and accuse men of losing their integrity and honor. We relax our moral principles and accuse virtue and honor of losing their majesty. We permit the hope and joy of our souls to die within us, and accuse the world of permitting its glory to pass away.

The hand relaxes its hold on the rope and accuses the anchor of losing its grip on the bottom!

In exactly the same way, too many of us have permitted the fascinations or the sorrows of life to dim our spiritual sight, to dull our spiritual hearing, and then blamed the other world for losing its reality and its power. The soul has not lost the evidence of its own existence, but we have lost our *sensitiveness* to that evidence. God does not shine less clearly, but we have

Hits and Misses

permitted our eyes to be closed. Providence and prayer are as real and available, but we have grown unobservant and untrustful! Jesus Christ stands out before the world in all his pristine splendor and divinity, but our hearts have lost their throb and our spirits their hunger! The *sun* has not disappeared from the heaven! The eye has suffered an eclipse!

If we really *want* to believe in the objects of our faith, they are all within our reach to-day. *They* have not altered! What we need (and *only* need) is the passion in our souls to attach ourselves *to* them! Everywhere multitudes are letting go their hold on *all* that is worth clinging to; but while they throw up their weak hands and go down into the vast deeps of despair and sin, here and there some brave soul hangs on! The whole race may abandon God, but Noah will cling to him until the floods have come and gone. All Sodom may let go, but Lot *never*! What difference did it make to Daniel that other men thought that Jehovah had expired in the heavens above the sacked Jerusalem. *He* never lost *his* faith! Not another soul on the hill of sacrifice felt the presence of the eternal God save Elijah, but *he* felt him! To the stupid masses in Jerusalem the spiritual had ceased to be real, but not for

He *Can* Believe, Who *Will* Believe

Jesus Christ! What they saw nowhere he beheld everywhere!

It is right here, my friends, that there slowly unfolds to us the guilty secret of our unfaith. Our *souls* themselves have lost their love and aspiration, and not as we vainly and sinfully delude ourselves, the Christian religion its vitality and its evidence! If it had, I would not reproach you! But it has not! Those sublime truths have lost none of their rolling and resounding sweetness. Christ has parted with no whit of that divinity which kindled in the souls of the Apostles and the martyrs that passion of love and devotion. Instead of losing its attractive power—like a magnet recruiting its stores from some invisible source—this sublime doctrine has steadily grown more seductive and entrancing to all whose souls were ready to receive it.

Do not solace yourself by saying that it is no longer credible! It is you who are no longer receptive! Your soul has lost its tenderness, its aspiration, its desire. You could believe if you wanted to. But you do *not*!

To me, with every passing year this indifference to God seems more terrible! I see more and more clearly what tragedies lie in store for souls that do not love the light and feed upon the bread of God! Each new experience of the

Hits and Misses

power of the soul to part with its capacities, and to suffer the atrophy of its sublime organs, fills me with a new horror. Who knows at what moment and in what critical experiences it will pass a line beyond which it can never recover its lost capacity. Suppose that this deadly wasting away of your power to believe in and appropriate the spiritual should be consummated *to-day!* And that after this morning hour, you should have passed a line which terminated your capability of being developed into a seraph or some higher form of life!

Does that seem preposterous?

Then come with me and open the top of this bee hive. In those cells are the embryos of the future generations of bees. There is absolutely no difference whatever between the eggs from which the workers and the queens are produced. You may select any two of them and it will be a matter of indifference which you name for the Empress of this tiny realm. It is all a question of environment and nutrition. In order to develop a queen, the workers remove the partitions of the adjoining cells, surround the larva by more extended ones, and feed it an *abundance of rich food called royal jelly!* The die is cast! Out of the potential embryo royalty has emerged. But the period in which this queenly potentiality exists

He *Can* Believe, Who *Will* Believe

is a limited one! There comes a critical hour, after which the larva is hopelessly and forever a *worker*! Nothing can alter its destiny now! Sun, moon, stars, flowers, a colony of 4,000,000 bees, all toil in vain. The deadly line of probation has been crossed.

And it was all a question of nourishment—of royal food! Who knows but it is so with us? Who knows but there is a fatal hour, and after it an impossibility of change. Are the functions and capacities of a man any less delicately adjusted, think you, than those of a honey bee? Who of us can measure the critical nature of this experience through which we are passing? If these souls of ours may be thus nourished by truth and love and hope, if there may be some delicate and subtle transmutation dependent upon the food we take, then I for one cry out, Oh, God, enlarge my cell and feed me with the bread of life!

I do not exaggerate the seriousness of life! I have no power to put it up before you in a thousandth part of its gravity! There is a warning word that gleams through every page of scripture and rings through every tragedy of human life, "Too late," "Too late!"

We know not all it means. Its entire significance is not disclosed; but he is no alarmist who resolutely tells a company of pilgrims who

Hits and Misses

pause a while to hear the message of his heart, "You may not trifle with your souls!" And I declare to you to-day, that if you find your faith slipping away from you—you must get it back! You must not and cannot live without it. The soul is just as real, God is just as real, Providence and prayer are just as real, and Jesus Christ is just as real as when John and Paul and Luther and Knox and Edwards grasped them in the arms of faith. You, too, can believe. You are as free as they! You are no different from the man in our story text, except that he was desperately in earnest. If you were as in earnest as *he*, there would be no trouble. Lord, I believe, he cried, help thou my unbelief. God *did* help. God *will* help. He always opens to those who knock and he is always found of him who seeks!

Temple Building, a Universal Instinct

*"The groves were God's first temples. Ere man
learned
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,
And spread the roof above them—ere he framed
The lofty vault to gather and roll back
The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood,
Amidst the cool and silence, he knelt down
And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks
And supplication."*

—Bryant.

*"God is not to be worshiped with sacrifices and
blood: for what pleasure can He have in the slaughter
of the innocent? but with a pure mind, a good and
honest purpose. Temples are not to be built for Him
with stones piled on high. God is to be consecrated
in the breast of each."*

—Seneca.

*"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I
seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the
Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of
the Lord and to inquire in His temple."*

—Psalms.

Address at dedication of the Avondale Presbyterian Church, October 2, 1898:

It is as much the obligation of a human organization as of a human organism, to reflect upon its deeds.

Now that we have with much expenditure of effort, of money, and of devotion erected this beautiful building, it will be becoming in us to inquire whether what we have done can be justified at the bar of reason, or is only one more mysterious act in that endless train of inexplicable operations which are prompted by the restlessness, the vanity, the ignorance, or the superstition of man.

In building this sacred edifice (which we are now to dedicate to the worship of that divine being of whose nature Jesus Christ has given us the fullest revelation), I shall argue that we have obeyed a natural and irrepressible instinct of the human soul, and are therefore justified in our toil and self-denial.

And because I wish to make this argument irrefragible and convincing, I will base it upon the following proposition:

Hits and Misses

Whatever men in all or almost all ages and places and circumstances have been accustomed to do, possesses a certain sacredness, and would appear to be prompted by some indestructible necessity of their very nature. Their deeds may have been coarse, vulgar, and even wicked ; but this would seem to prove that a good instinct had been corrupted and perverted rather than that they had been trying to give expression to a feeling and a desire which were bad in themselves.

If in almost all ages, places, and circumstances then, there has been some power operating upon the minds of men which has impelled them to rear altars and shrines and temples—it would seem as safe to infer that it was as much an integral part of their nature to do this (and that if it were rightly done it were well done), as to infer that because everywhere and in all ages beavers have built dams, birds nests, bees honey-combs, and coral insects islands, it was a proper and holy function of their natures so to do.

And so the golden thread that will run through the warp and woof of this discourse will be the idea, that it is as much a function of man to build temples, as of the spider to weave a web, or the worm a cocoon—and that as he always has done it, he always will do it,

Temple Building, a Universal Instinct

and that in his performance of this act he is consciously or unconsciously fulfilling one of the ends of his being.

If there is, then, something sacred and beautiful in what the birds are doing in trees and insects in the ground or air, there is something unspeakably more beautiful in what every colony of men, women, and children do, when, prompted by this divine and holy impulse, they gather together the crude materials that lie strewn about them, carve, decorate, and polish them, and with their transforming touch make them "suffer a sea change into that something new and strange,"—a graceful and beautiful temple of worship.

And so if there has entered this portal some proud man, whose mission it is to scoff, let him go forth into the open air and scoff at those tiny architects who in earth and air and sea, are obeying the summons of that divine Being who has called them into life, and are decorating the world with those delicate and beautiful structures which it is their mission to create and ours to admire.

Come, then! Stand here upon this vantage ground, and let me with the wand of history summon the generations of the dead back from their eternal repose, to the structural activities of their busy lives. Look thou, on them!

Hits and Misses

It is a proof that the aboriginal tribes of our own native land had never attained a high state of culture or advancement, that they are exceptions to this almost universal law, and have not left behind them the ruin of an altar or a temple, unless the rude mounds of our Ohio Valley may be such.

But to the south of us—in lands more fertile, beneath skies more blue and in an environment where life was stimulated to more rapid development—the more refined and cultivated Mexicans erected temples whose ruins still fill the mind of the beholder with wonder.

When Cortez and his companions wandered about the City of Mexico under the leadership of their native guides, they took their way from the bustling scenes of the market place to the great Trocalli. It occupied the spot which probably had been consecrated to the gods from the foundation of the city, but the enormous structure which loomed before their astonished eyes had been completed in 1486.

It was a work of rude but sincere art. It was imposing. It was awe inspiring. It rose in pyramidal form to a vast height. It was inhabited (or rather haunted) by ferocious and terrible priests, whose hands were busily plying the axes with which they sacrificed their human victims—hundreds of thousands of whose

Temple Building, a Universal Instinct

skulls were piled in heaps in sacred chambers. Their ritual was somber, their music grotesque and horrible; but all was in keeping with the awfulness of the sanctuary itself.

It might seem at first that it would be safe to argue that every instinct which could prompt such bloody and such brutal deeds was evil, and should be exterminated. But a more chaste and sober reflection has taught us that no instinct can be uprooted; but must be educated and developed. It was not that the instinct of worship was wrong, but that it found a wrong *expression!* And so their human slaughters in their temple do not throw any genuine suspicion upon that holiness of the original instinct which *built* the temple; but only demonstrates that it needed a perfect evolution. It was still an *instinct*, and in obeying it they yielded to a power which has been resistlessly impelling men to perform this sacred function in every age of recorded history.

And this same impulse took possession of a multitude of savages in England long centuries before that country was known to the Romans. It drove them out upon Salisbury Plain, two miles from Amesbury, in Wiltshire, and there, with songs and incantations, they erected a structure so strange and weird as still to attract the feet of pilgrims.

Hits and Misses

Reconstruct, if you can, with the aid of your imagination, the scene in which the hordes of semi-civilized beings, who adored the supreme Power which they saw manifested in primeval forests, foaming oceans and heavens ablaze with lightning, marched around this temple of Stonehenge to rude music and resounding hymns— and remember that it was as much an instinct for them to do this, as for the wild beasts to seek their food in forests, or the eagles to build their nests upon a crag.

It was this same instinct in the hearts of the men of that great race which issued from the rich earth in the valley of the Nile when, centuries before recorded history, they erected those temples, the sublimest type of which is to be found in ruins on the banks of the Nile, on the site of ancient Thebes.

It created similar forms of architecture in Asia. In ancient Babylon hundreds of thousands of men labored to erect that vast pile, upon the top of which the priests worshiped and the astronomers watched the stars; and in India the pilgrim uncovers his head in awe at the labor and the devotion which carved the temple of Ellera from a single isolated rock, creating thus a building as large as the Royal Exchange, in London—a magnificent jewel in stone.

Temple Building, a Universal Instinct

It came like a divine madness upon the ancient Jews. At the call of their great King—without the sound of hammer or of axe, their quiet hands patiently and reverently fitted together that material which had been shaped in far-away quarries, foundries and shops, into a building whose memory still haunts the world like a half-forgotten dream.

Nothing is more astonishing than the *variety* of the creations of this sacred impulse. As life (that eternal mystery) clothes itself in various forms in the diverse regions of the earth—the palm, the oak, the pine, the rhinoceros, the lion, and the gazelle—so this all-animating impulse selected forms suitable to the different characteristics of the worshipers. Some of them have been horrible and ugly beyond the power of language to describe; but on the Acropolis of Athens, it animated its devotees to construct a building, whose perfect proportions have corrected the standards of taste and the canons of beauty for more than twenty centuries.

A few generations later, this chaste genius of architecture revisited the world again, and on the site of the Church of St. Sophia, which had been erected by Constantine, and which was destroyed in 532, Justinian summoned Anthemius de Fralles and Isidore de Milet to do for

Hits and Misses

Constantinople what had been done for Athens. Not only were the mines and the forests compelled to furnish raw material, but the temples of Ephesus, Palmyra, Pergamos and countless other cities were despoiled of their columns and their treasures to make it beautiful and sublime.

"Solomon, I have surpassed thee!" cried the enraptured Emperor, when it was done, and thus gave expression to that human pride which has mingled itself with the pure devotion of all the builders of these sacred edifices.

Not only the Jew and the Christian, but the fierce and relentless Mohammedans, felt the inward motions of this constructive impulse.

Consolidated from the fierce tribes of the desert, and animated by the majestic spirit of Mohammed, the Mussulmans, in their turn, sowed their sacred mosques broadcast over Europe, Asia, and Africa. But their devotion culminated not in an original structure. They adopted, altered and reconstructed St. Sophia, and it stands to-day as their testimony that they, too, have been animated by a mysterious and irresistible emotion, which has compelled them to build or to dedicate a building where men might worship God.

But never in the history of humanity did this instinct reveal itself so powerfully as in the Middle Ages.

Temple Building, a Universal Instinct

To give expression to a feeling is to realize it (make it real), and as matter is the language of the spirit, it is the medium of its realization. Thoughts float idly across the mind till they have been precipitated in print, painted on canvas, carved in marble, or cemented in stone.

And so they built "those everlasting piles,
Types of the spiritual church which God hath reared."

Stone in them seems to lose its stubborn nature as it soars, in obedience to the infinite aspiration of the soul. They are the world's most striking instance of the spirit's power to subdue matter, since it is matter of the most obstinate, solid, concrete kind.

There are two ways in which we can form some vital and vivid conception of the might and majesty of the operation of this instinct for sacred architecture in this wonderful epoch.

A. In the first place, by reflecting upon the wide extent of territory and the immeasurable masses of material in which it operated.

The whole known Occidental, and not a little of the Oriental world, was dotted with the products of the constructive genius of that wonderful era. Seen from the upper air, these constellations of temples would resemble the constellations of the stars as seen from the earth.

Hits and Misses

The citizens of every great metropolis were seized by an ungovernable impulse to express their religious feeling in imperishable stone. Great provinces were called upon by Bishops for offerings, and a willing and eager people poured out their money like water.

Their ardor and enthusiasm were never surpassed and probably never equaled in any spiritual movement. The visions of those structures which they were to erect floated before their minds in enticing beauty. Millions of the commonest people, incapable ordinarily of cherishing large and lofty conceptions, became the almost passive instruments of a sublime ardor. The rich gave of their wealth and the poor of their poverty. Artists spent the best years of their lives in working out their ideals on canvas, in wood, or in marble. Workmen became absorbed in their toil and swallowed up in the immensity of their task. The lords and ladies of high degree permitted themselves to be harnessed like beasts of burden by the side of artisans and beggars, to trucks upon which great stones were loaded, and hauled them over country roads and through city streets to the accompaniment of sacred songs and harps and cymbals.

These edifices were centuries in process of erection. The architects who planned them

Temple Building, a Universal Instinct

died and gave place to successors. The generation which began them passed away, sometimes before their foundations were fully laid. The next reared the superstructure, but never saw the roof or tower. The third, or fourth, or fifth, following in their footsteps and inheriting their enthusiasm, laid the capstone with rejoicing.

The mind of the student of this tremendous movement of religious ardor is stupefied by its intensity, its beauty, its results. Passing through England and gazing upon St. Paul's, Westminster, Durham; entering France and contemplating Rouen, Chartres, Rheims, Notre Dame; Germany, and trembling at the grandeur of Cologne and Strasburgh, and Italy, to be dazed and bewildered by Pisa, Milan, Orvieto, Sienna, Florence, St. Mark's, and St. Paul's without the gates and St. Peter's within, and scores of other lesser lights, he feels that some awful power above, as real as that which lifts the tides, has lifted the thoughts, the aspirations and the hopes of men to heaven. Such an instinct, he feels, is rooted and grounded in the depths of human nature. Men have done these deeds because the central power of their being impelled them. Such labors are as true and necessary a function of the life of man as the clearing of forests, the transportation of articles

Hits and Misses

of commerce, eating, sleeping, sowing, reaping. The emotive instinct may have been perverted. Its perversion may have led man to deeds of atrocity, but the instinct itself must be divine!

B. But there is another way in which its might and meaning may be detected and felt.

It is by pausing before a single one of these majestic fabrics and studying it in detail. Choose which you may—be it Cologne, Milan, Rouen, or Rheims—a careful survey of the entire structure will leave upon the mind the same awe-struck impression which remained on that of Lowell before the Cathedral of Chartres, as, “following some fine instinct in his feet, and looking up suddenly, he found his eyes”—

“Confronted with the minster’s vast repose,
Silent and gray as forest-leagured cliff
Left inland by the ocean’s slow retreat,
That hears afar the breeze-borne rote, and longs,
Remembering shocks of surf that clomb and fell,
Spume-sliding down the baffled decuman,
It rose before me, patiently remote,
From the great tides of life it breasted once,
Hearing the noise of men as in a dream.
I stood before the triple northern port,
Where dedicated shapes of saints and kings,
Stern faces bleared with immemorial watch,
Looked down, benignly grave, and seemed to say:
*‘Ye come and go incessant; we remain
Safe in the hallowed quiets of the past.
Be reverent, ye who flit and are forgot,
Of faith so nobly realized as this!’ ”*

Temple Building, a Universal Instinct

Nobly indeed! Made *real* indeed! As the poet "followed some fine instinct in his feet," and looked up suddenly—those mighty builders followed some fine instinct in their hearts and built up loftily and mightily in everlasting stone the deep emotions of their souls!

If there were only one such building in the world, the student of the life of man might not pause in his search for the solution of the mysteries of this, his marvelous being, until he had found what potent inward motion of his spirit had put it forth.

But, as we have already seen, it is universal—not unique. The erection of these edifices is confined neither to localities, nations, nor epochs. It is as invariably a function of human life as plowing, and reaping, and spinning, and weaving.

We must permit our eyes to roam over the whole wide world to grasp the full sweep of its operations. We must recall the mosques of the Mohammedans, the temples of the Hindus and the pagodas of the Chinese—the terrible Jumna Marjed—Juggernaut—the porcelain tower of Nankin—and the thousands upon thousands of smaller reproductions of their grandeur and their glory scattered over those mysterious regions.

Nor is this phenomenon an evanescent phase

Hits and Misses

of rudimentary instincts and vanishing emotions, whose manifestations are confined alone to the ancient and medieval world. The last born race and its last born generation has come into being impregnated by this divine aspiration to construct temples in which to worship God! The virus (if virus it *be*) burns as hotly in its veins as in those of any who have wandered beneath the stars in wonder and looked out upon infinity in awe.

It may be that the operation of this instinct in this new land of America is not calculated to impress the imagination so much by the grandeur and sublimity of its architectural expression, but it does so even more by the power of its moral sentiment.

Never from the beginning of our history has a colony of these mysterious ephemera which we call men swarmed from the old hive into a new one, be it upon seacoast, prairie or mountain summit, but with swift and indefatigable instinct these tiny workers have reared a temple at the same time when they builded a fire-side, a trading place and a schoolhouse! Nothing can prevent this action—nothing interfere with the performance of this function! As certainly as the sun germinates the seed they sow in the furrows and constructs the graceful forms of wheat and corn and vine, the divine

Temple Building, a Universal Instinct

Power that broods upon their souls compels them to rear over their heads the roof of a sanctuary in which they may safely and reverently bend before the great All Father.

Infidels and atheists may scoff at this instinct and prophesy its disappearance, but they can not explain it and they can not destroy it.

A quarter of a century or so ago Robert Ingersoll, addressing an audience of skeptics in the little village of Watkins, ventured the assertion that the course of the Christian religion was nearly run, and that it no longer possessed the vitality to propagate itself. His words were transported across the continent to Chaplain McCabe, who telegraphed him: "Go on with your scoffing. We are building a Methodist church every day in the year!"

They are building more now! And every little community and every great aggregation, is still imbued with this structural spirit, and still animated by this architectural impulse. Nothing is more certain than that America is to be a land of churches!

When you stop the birds building nests, the beavers dams, the coral insects islands, and men and women homes to shelter their own heads and protect the tender forms of their offspring, you may hope to have them cease the erection of temples for the worship of God.

Hits and Misses

Awed by this mystery of our being, we recall the memorable words of Plutarch which the lapse of ages has proven to be not only history but prophecy, that men traveling on the earth might "find towns and cities without walls, without letters, without kings, without houses, without wealth, money, theaters, gymnasia, while nowhere had been seen or would be, any city without temples and Gods, without prayers, divinations and sacrifices," and that "a city might sooner be built without ground on which to fix it, than a community to be constituted void of religion, or being so constituted be preserved."

We have now pursued the channel of our thought to that sacred spot where the stream of reason mingles itself with the ocean of reverence and adoration. For there is always a place at last where we encounter the insoluble mysteries of being, and nothing remains for us but to prostrate ourselves before the Creator in our ignorance and love.

We may trace this instinct through its marvelous revelations of itself in shrines and temples, to its fountain spring in the soul of man. But when we arrive at this point we can go no farther. It was God who made this spring to flow! It is He who implanted the instinct of

Temple Building, a Universal Instinct

worship and of temple building. We build and worship—for we must.

Be it ours to eradicate the evil from this instinct if we can! Let us cast out all superstition and unreason! Here let us rejoice and be glad that there have been no horrid incantations over *this* temple, that no human victims have been offered nor animal sacrifices been slain! But if there be in any human heart a thought unworthy of its God and of this place, let us drive it out, and all be pure and holy here, as father and mother and little children are pure around the hearthstone, and the angels of God are pure around the great white throne.

PRINTED BY R. R. DONNELLEY
AND SONS COMPANY AT THE
LAKESIDE PRESS, CHICAGO, ILL.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: May 2006

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

12X
9175
G

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 017 578 903 0

